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ISSUE 290

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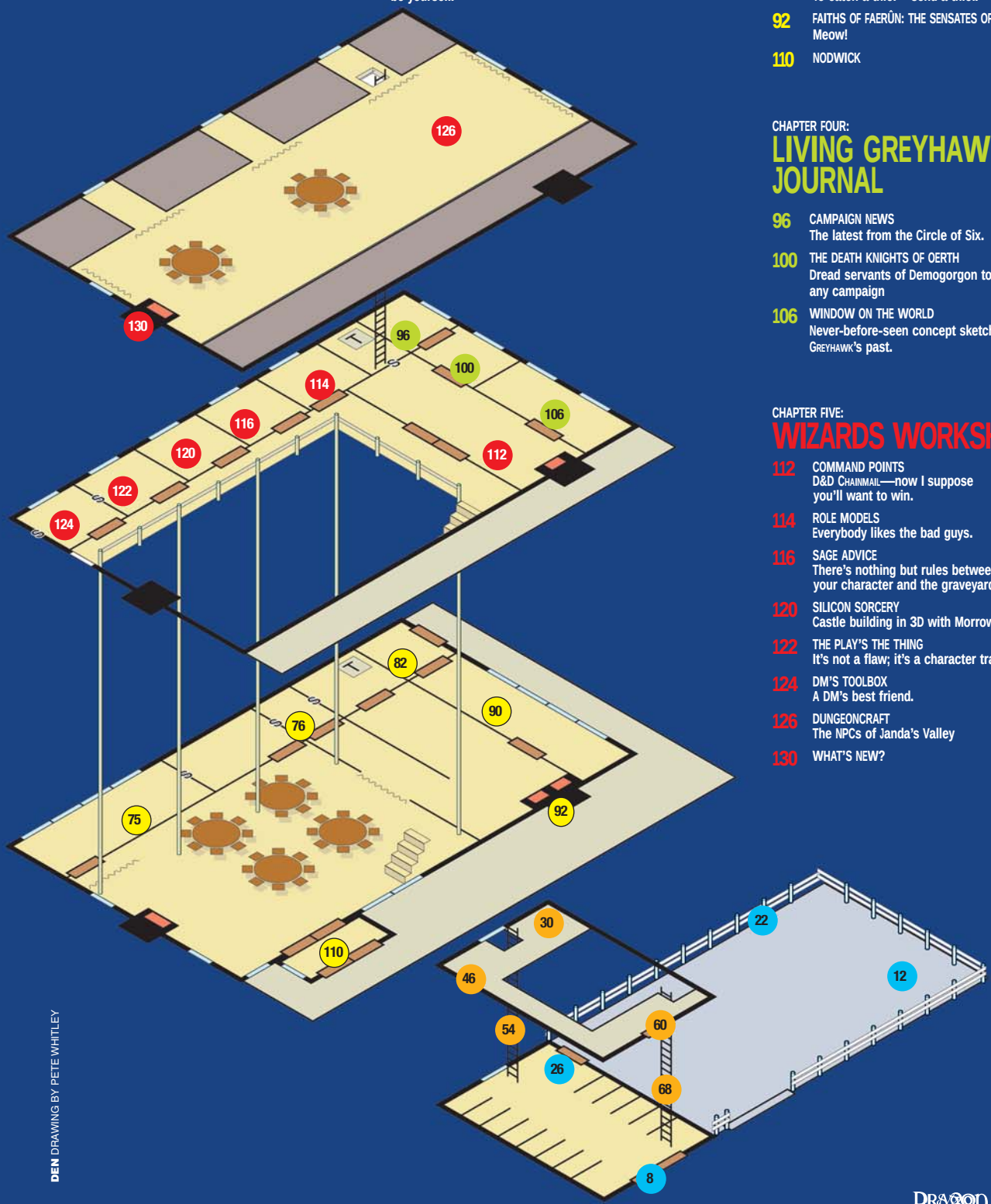


DEN DRAWING BY PETE WHITLEY

Random Tactics Generator

I've seen everything from over-organized groups that approached combat like a modern-day swat team to totally ineffective groups that always worked against each other. I've also seen groups that don't play through combat at all, but I mostly drop out of those.

A few months ago, I joined Monte Cook's campaign set in the city of Ptolus. The rest of the group had played quite a bit together, and the party even had a name, "The Company of the Black Lantern." Taking their name from a lantern blackened by dragon fire, Gaerioth the monk (Keith Strohm), Vexander the sorcerer/rogue (Andy Collins), and Sercian the rogue/fighter/sorcerer (Chris Perkins) had forged a decidedly mixed reputation. All experienced industry professionals, the other players had logged, between them, something like 10 billion hours of game time. Even before the game, I expected something special. I had no idea. . . .

In my first session, I noticed a strange habit that the rest of the group seemed to take as par for the course. They tended to retreat forward. By "retreat forward," I mean "bring more monsters into an already dangerous fight." Barely holding our own against a temple filled with rifle-wielding ratmen, I was stunned when our hit-and-move tactics included a move around a corner and through a door to an adjoining room. A door that we knew led to a powerful cleric gathering reinforcements. When I asked why, I really didn't believe Andy's blithe, "Oh, we always fight like this."

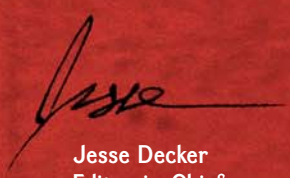
It turns out this behavior is infectious. A few sessions after I joined the campaign, Monte added a fifth player, Jeff Quick. About three rounds into Jeff's first combat with us, he turned to me and asked, "Aren't we retreating?" My blithe reply—"Oh, we always fight like this,"—puzzled Jeff. Although I had made it clear that my character wanted to retreat, on my action (right before Jeff's) I had walked forward to take a shot at an opposing dark elf. It made sense at the time.

We'd do better if we used a random tactics generator.

So here it is, the Random Tactics Generator, courtesy of the Company of the Black Lantern. To use it, Roll a 2d6 and consult the following chart:

2 Yell "Retreat!" and then attack normally.
3 Look around and ask, "Are we retreating?" Then attack normally.
4 Announce that you need healing and charge the foe farthest from the cleric.
5 Tell the nearest NPC to maneuver to a flanking position, then retreat.
6 Go to the bathroom and read the *Monster Manual.*
7 Use a spell, an item, or an ability that helps you move away from the group.
8 Open the nearest closed door. If there's no door nearby, go look for one.
9 Stop play to announce that your last attack actually hit.
10 Make a comment about *haste* being too powerful. Roll again on this table.
11 Move into the next room, trigger a trap, and call for help.
12 Retreat.

Try it. It's surprisingly effective.



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DRAGON

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Feedback on issue #288 is rolling in, and the holidays are just around the corner.

As we finalize plans for many of next year's issues, we're more interested than ever in hearing your feedback and ideas. In addition to sending your comments to us by email (or regular mail, if you like buying stamps), jump on the message boards at ***www.wizards.com*** *or join us for our monthly chats at the Wizards community site.*

One flip through the magazine should tell you that there's a new section starting this issue. The LIVING GREYHAWK Journal *has come to* DRAGON*, and we're excited about offering this exclusive* GREYHAWK *content to a wider audience. Check out page 95 to see what all the fuss is about, and then send us a letter telling us what you think.*

Octoberfestering

Each September I get more than a bit excited for the October issue of *DRAGON Magazine.* Every year it is full of new undead for me to kill, vampire slaying tips, cool necromancy ideas, and so on. This year was no exception. I really enjoyed the article on variant death gods. D&D has too long been beset by stereotypical death gods like Myrkul and Nerull, who are evil and seek to bring death about in any way possible. I was glad to see examples from religious history of how one might construct a variant death god and incorporate it into a D&D campaign.

My only unfulfilled wish from issue #288 is that you did not expand your treatment of nonstereotypical death gods to the ones who already exist in the FORGOTTEN REALMS and GREYHAWK campaign settings (Kelemvor and Wee Jas, respectively). Kelemvor is a lawful-neutral death god who, according to the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting* book, sponsors a group of paladins! I would have liked to have seen some tips and ideas of how one could imagine such a death god in the aftermath of Myrkul and Cyric.

Wee Jas is at the other end of the alignment spectrum—she seems to favor undead and leans more toward evil than Kelemvor. However, she is also a magic goddess. An article that compared and contrasted these two lawful-neutral death gods would have been great! At least some mention of them would have been nice.

I was disappointed in the lack of a specialty priest of Kelemvor prestige class. I have been very impressed with the prestige classes presented in the "Faiths of Faerûn" articles, and when I saw that issue #288 had some information on death gods, I was certain there was going to be a prestige class for Kelemvor's clergy. Much to my dismay, I was wrong.

Please don't take this as an entirely negative letter. I am a big fan of *DRAGON* and was pleased with everything that was in the October issue, I was just hoping for something on some of the existing death gods in the D&D game.

Jason Unsworth
Moscow, ID

Our articles don't often combine historical conversions and material from original game worlds, and after thinking about the idea for a while, we've decided to waffle. What do you think folks, should historical material be presented

Random Encounters

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PREVIEWS PUBLICATIONS

DECEMBER

SONG AND SILENCE
A D&D Accessory
by David Noonan and John D. Rateliff

Song and Silence explores bards and rogues—two of the most versatile classes in D&D. Inside you'll find new prestige classes, feats, equipment, alternate rules, and suggestions for building characters.

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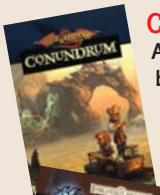

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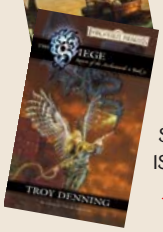

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JANUARY

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THE GOLDEN ORB
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A DRAGONLANCE Anthology
Edited by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman

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side-by-side with material from the FORGOTTEN REALMS, GREYHAWK, or other worlds, or should the two types of material each have their own articles?

A-Fonted

I've been reading *DRAGON Magazine* with greater frequency and enthusiasm lately, and I thought I'd give you some feedback, which mostly includes what I don't like. This shouldn't be interpreted as dislike for the magazine; I find *DRAGON* a valuable resource. Having said that, on to my gripes, which center around issue #288.

Please abandon the use of terrible, practically illegible fonts, like those used for the title and headings of "Plots & Schemes." The content of the article was wonderful; the fonts and layout were difficult to read and distracting. As an example of good layout, refer to "Vampire Slayer's Toolbox" on page 78. This article possessed superb layout and presentation: clean, professional, easy to read, and accompanied by excellent artwork that complimented rather than overpowered the text.

I also dislike the "blueprint" page headers used in the Wizard's Workshop articles. I don't think they fit the fantasy theme of the game. They're not offensive or distracting, they just don't work very well with the motif of the magazine.

J.W. Cone
Address withheld

Remember the Goosebumps books? Remember the horrible title font that looked like it was running down the page? Just be glad we didn't use that. Seriously, your complaint is well founded, and we're unlikely to use that font again.

Meta-man

DRAGON issue #288 included an article by Robin D. Laws entitled "Dungeons in Disguise." While I find most of the article interesting, the section "Thinking Like a DM" bothers me a great deal. This section explicitly encourages metagame thinking. Personally, I think that players should not be encouraged to think of the game in terms of how to get from one scene to the next. To quote the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* (page 13), "Any time players base their characters' actions on logic that depends on the fact that they're playing a game, they're using metagame thinking. This should always be discouraged, because it detracts from real roleplaying and spoils the suspension of disbelief." Robin D. Laws's article seems to view the point of roleplaying as solving problems set forth by the DM, instead of solving those problems in character.

I loved the rest of the features of issue #288. "Graveyards," "Tag Team Terrors," and "Plots and Schemes" will be giving my PCs nightmares for years to come. Keep up the good work but remember: Metagaming is the bane of good roleplaying everywhere.

Brandes Stoddard
Address withheld

If it becomes the primary technique used to solve problems, this kind of metagaming might be disruptive to "real roleplaying." However, problem

MORE PREVIEWS

DRAGON Magazine #291
Gnomes!

DRAGON Magazine #291 explores the secret lives of gnomes. Experience what it's like to be a gnome. Find out why they can speak with burrowing animals, and see the process that grants them spellcasting powers. Check out the new gnome subraces. Play the games gnomes enjoy and use the magic items they create. Learn how to use illusions to your best advantage. Then check out some new Illusion spells, and find out how to design your own.

Inside you'll also find rules for underwater combat, new fiction from Neal Barrett Jr., "Class Acts," "Faiths of Faerûn," "Cities of the Ages," and "Elminster's Guide to the Realms." And as always, you'll find advice, tools, and tactics to improve your game!

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DUNGEON Magazine #90
Pulp Heroes

December's *DUNGEON* features a complete issue of the newly revised *POLYHEDRON Magazine*. Now with a "Definitive d20" focus, the new Polyhedron brings a complete d20 game in every issue in addition to industry news, previews, reviews, and the latest RPGA updates. December's issue features Pulp Heroes, a 50+-page, stand-alone game set in the Pulp Era. Guide your team of aviators, private-eyes, and magicians against Nazi robots and power mad sorcerers in the latest d20 offering from Wizards of the Coast!

Tears for Twilight Hollow
by Angel Leigh McCoy and Christopher Perkins

The soul of a hero has been imprisoned by forces of darkness. The PCs must find a way to send this captive holy warrior to her eternal reward. A D&D FORGOTTEN REALMS adventure for 7th-level PCs but adaptable for levels 3-12.

The Elfwhisper
by J.C. Alvarez

A hunt for a ruthless bandit warlord leads the heroes into the haunted Wildwood, where a ghostly choir of dead elves laments the fall of an ancient empire and its beautiful princess. A D&D adventure for 8th-level PCs but adaptable for levels 4-12.

Totentaz
by Bernard Mees

Luzern has become a city where the dead never rest for long. Can the PCs unravel the mystery of the strange curse that seems to have befallen this once-peaceful village? A D&D adventure for 4th-level PCs but adaptable for levels 1-8.

forum

Out of the Mouths of Babes

This letter is in reply to Matthew Stagg's comments in "Forum" from issue #288. I think it is wonderful that he taught his nephew to play D&D. I am only 12 myself, and I realize that there aren't many players my age—just a handful of kids at my school play. So, I took the liberty of teaching two of my best friends how to play. I am very glad I did. They are both addicted to the game now, and I hope that they will teach other people how to play, as well. I am also teaching my little sister how to play. Although she is far from understanding everything, she loves the role-playing aspect, which I think is wonderful. Learning that roles are more important than rolls at such an early age is great, in my opinion. This teaches that D&D is not all about strength modifiers, feats, or statistics.

I would also like to hear from some of your other readers regarding a problem I am having. In one of the campaigns I play in, I am playing an evil drow wizard. When we were making our characters for this campaign, our DM told us to make our characters at our homes, because he didn't want the choices of our fellow gamers to influence us. My problem is that when I made this drow, what I didn't know was that there were two paladins and an elf in our party! Between my *change self* and *undetectable alignment* spells and my long, hooded black cloak, I should be able to keep up the act of being a normal elf until I decide on a plan of action. Any suggestions of actions from your other readers would be very greatly appreciated.

Lisa Ohanian
Derwood, MD

Superfluous Philosophizing

I am writing in response to the letter submitted by Chris Hein in issue #287, which I thought seemed excessive. One untoward illustration actually ruined the whole issue for him? This puts me in mind of an *solving is often left in the hands of players, rather than their characters, and if the players become bored and frustrated because they can't figure out where to go or what to do, the game suffers much more than it does from the introduction of a little bit of metagame thinking. Solving problems using your own brain, rather than your character's skill checks is an entirely metagame activity, but role-playing comes in once a solution has been proposed—Matt solves the problem, but it's up to Grug the barbarian to act on that solution, and that's all about roleplaying.*

Geeked Out

I don't mean to complain, especially considering the FORGOTTEN REALMS map sections in the recent issues of *DRAGON* (#287-290) are a free bonus, but the map section in issue #288 has a problem.

I was so geeked after getting the first section in issue #287, that I made room on a wall in my basement to put it up, leaving space to line up the other sections as they arrived in my mailbox. I received issue #288 the other day and got the map out, all excited to tape it to the first—lining everything up nice and carefully to avoid ruining it. Unfortunately, no matter how I tried, I couldn't make the map sections line up.

After closely looking at the two sections, I noted the text and city/town symbols seem to have shifted approximately 1/8th of an inch!

As much as this is disappointing (I really was excited about having this huge map that fit together so nice for my FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign), I suppose I can't expect there is a way to fix the problem. I just wanted to bring it to your attention. I appreciate the idea of publishing the map like this, I just wish it could have been of slightly higher quality so it could be used to its full potential.

Doug Nelson
Canton, MI

The shift is there. I can't find anywhere where it's as great as 1/8th of an inch, but that's not the point. The point is that it shouldn't be there at all. Since it's only noticeable in the areas that the maps overlap, I hope most fans still find it useable.

Weighing In

In "Sage Advice" from issue #288, the last question asks about the carrying capacity of a riding lizard.

caption contest

Go beyond just "funny looking" and **WRITE A CAPTION** for this cartoon and send it to Caption/DRAGON Magazine, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057 by February 1st. Cutting up your magazine won't earn you any favors, but you can send in a photocopy with your entry if you want to be professional about it.

earlier complaint about the Insane Clown Posse's ad from issue #277. I found the bloodiness of the ad distasteful, but my major response has been to avoid buying Insane Clown Posse CDs. Similarly, I fail to sympathize with the objection to a demonstration of halfling martial ability. I think the illustration serves as an excellent indicator of how halflings have survived and flourished without the noble protection of big, strong beings.

While I'm at it, I don't understand the problem of non-evil death gods, because I already had one when the matter was raised. His name is Keurag, and he's a newly-ascended demipower. Keurag is neutral, and his clerics teach that death simply is and should neither be feared nor sought out.

In any event, there is one vitally important fact to keep in mind: D&D is just a game! I am repeatedly surprised at how many people are willing to make major philosophical debates out of an activity that amounts to getting together with your friends.

I enjoy the magazine, even though I disagree with several fellow readers, and I'm always looking forward to your next issue.

Tom Chlebus
Sturgis, MI

Disturbing Debauchery

I am writing in response to the letter "Wanted: Hero Seeks Same" in *Dragon* #288. I believe that Geoff Davey is justified in his desire not to play in an evil campaign, as I think it can be incredibly disturbing.

During a long-running campaign, our DM wanted to take a break from our regular characters, so he made up evil 10th-level PCs, and for one game session we played these evil characters.

Our first evil game was pretty much like a heroic game. We did some sleuthing and killed a handful of monsters. Sure, we terrified a few peasants, but the real difference between this and our regular sessions was that we dismissed the NPC peasants as unimportant. When they got in our way, we killed them without fearing repercussions or the need to justify our actions.

Some time later we decided to try

According to what I see in the *Player's Handbook* and the *Monster Manual,* the correct numbers should be 232 for light load, 466 for medium load, and 700 for heavy load. I'm sure this was just an editorial oversight, as I know the Sage never makes mistakes like that.

Keep it up, *Dragon.* I look forward to each new issue with increasing impatience.

David Loya
Ambridge, PA

David 1; The Sage 0

Cover Captivated

Every *Dragon Magazine* cover is exceptional, but when I looked upon *Dragon* #287, all I could say was "wow!" I would like to invite your readers to submit artwork to my website in which a Dungeons & Dragons' character is holding up an issue of *Dragon.* We are starting a "*Dragon*" gallery and posting all drawings on our website. If interested in participating, your readers should send their drawings to the following address:

Jazma Universe Online
D&D Cover Submission
5606 Moonlight Way
Elk Grove, CA 95758

Paul Dale Roberts
Jazma Universe Online

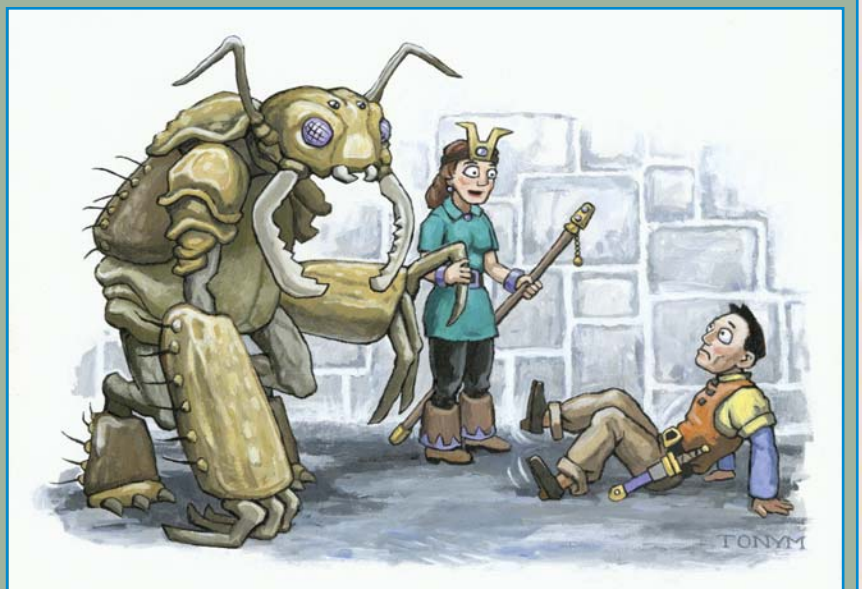
Good Gone Bad

Dragon #287 was superb! I hadn't picked up a copy of *Dragon* since the new format, and I find the magazine outstanding.

The theme concept is great. I like the idea that each magazine seems focused on a central theme. The magazine is attractive with vivid artwork and unique font types. The articles are useful and interesting to read.

I was glad to see the "When Celestials Attack" article. I know that the new edition of D&D started using the terms demon and devil again, and I was pleased to learn that the more fiendish creatures do not have to be referred to by nearly impossible to pronounce names. However, I have noticed that there are piles of demon resources and relatively few detailing "angels" or celestials. A pit fiend is a

caption contest winner



WINNER

"I'll only be a week. Make sure that you play with him every day, and if he eats any of the neighbors, just let him bury the bones in the backyard."

Congratulations Bob Martin • Phoenix, AZ

RUNNER-UP

"I'm leaving you, John, and I'm taking the Umber Hulk with me."

Joshua Walker • Colorado City, TX

it again with the same characters, but like our regular characters the evil PCs had advanced in levels and power. With the increased power came a larger mission, which we prosecuted with abandon. We razed villages, took hostages, killed, pillaged, and destroyed everything we could. As the game proceeded, so did the depths of depravity to which our characters sank.

This time we did not simply disregard the thoughts and feelings of the NPCs. Instead, we went out of our way to hurt or kill them. As players, we had a pretty good time about it—until the end of the session. When we had completed the adventure and it was time to go home we all sort of sat there in disbelief, unable to grasp the joy we had just taken in such debauchery and evil. We all agreed that it was an emotionally disturbing game, and it was certainly the most disturbing game I have ever played. We have not played an evil session since.

Personally, Geoff, I suggest you argue harder with your group or find a new game.

Name and address withheld

pissed off?

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terrible, hellish beast, but watching an angel of death show up to enact his craft isn't a pretty sight either.

I also enjoyed the article "Decisive Moments." I like articles dealing with character development and thinking outside the box. One thing I've always tried to do is break the norms for my players' characters. For example, not all orcs are vile creatures and not all paladins are righteous doers-of-good. Motive and ethics are a big issue, and I'd like to see more articles dealing with character development and situational roleplaying. Choices for the characters should not always be black and white. I think it is important to force the players to weigh the odds on what their characters do during any given situation.

As for supplemental information, I enjoyed reading the "Fiend Slayer" by Monte Cook, and I loved the artwork by Mark Zay on page 85. Is there any way for readers to get prints of illustrations in your magazine? Also, the new monsters were really cool, especially the "Bonespitter." I hope that new creatures are a regular addition to the magazine.

I like what I see. Keep up the outstanding work.

Rich Guth
Indiana, PA

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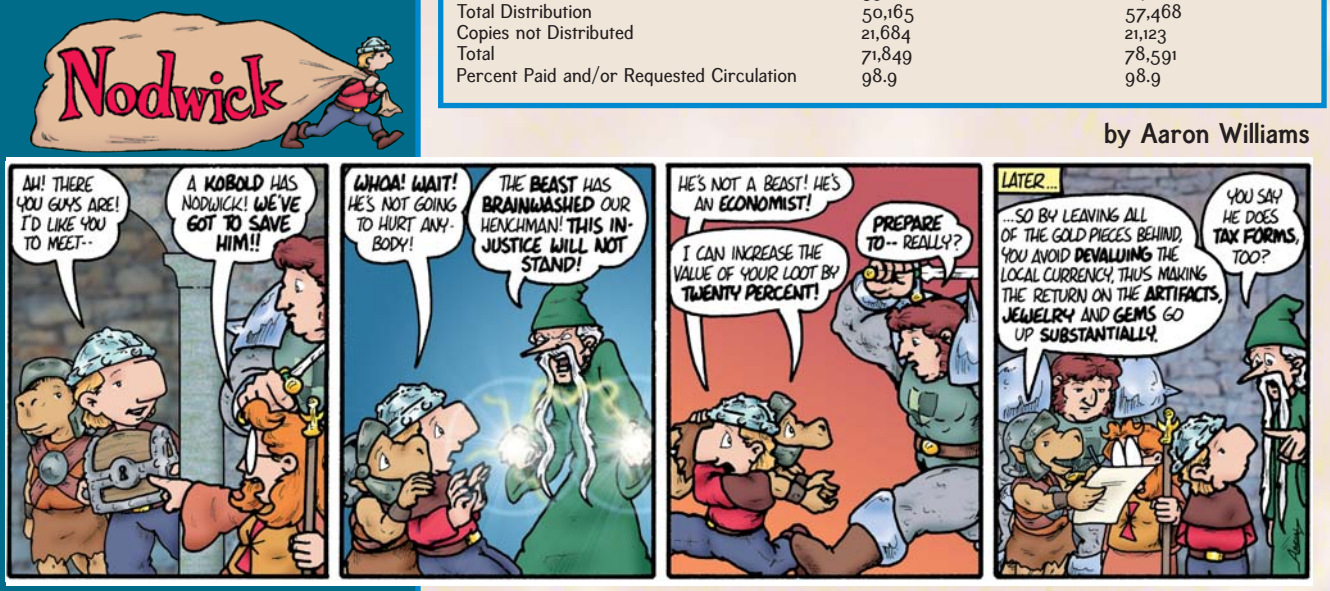

Nodwick
AH! THERE YOU GUYS ARE! I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET--
A KOBOLD HAS NODWICK! WE'VE GOT TO SAVE HIM!!
WHOA! WAIT! HE'S NOT GOING TO HURT ANYBODY!
THE BEAST HAS BRAINWASHED OUR HENCHMAN! THIS INJUSTICE WILL NOT STAND!
HE'S NOT A BEAST! HE'S AN ECONOMIST!
I CAN INCREASE THE VALUE OF YOUR LOOT BY TWENTY PERCENT!
PREPARE TO-- REALLY?
LATER...
...SO BY LEAVING ALL OF THE GOLD PIECES BEHIND, YOU AVOID DEVALUING THE LOCAL CURRENCY, THUS MAKING THE RETURN ON THE ARTIFACTS, JEWELRY AND GEMS GO UP SUBSTANTIALLY.
YOU SAY HE DOES TAX FORMS, TOO?

by Aaron Williams

UP ON A SOAPBOX BY GARY GYGAX

ALL I NEED TO KNOW I LEARNED FROM D&D

LESSON #4: THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY

THE JEWELED MAN

When reminiscing about the "old days," players in the original GREYHAWK campaign still bring up the Jeweled Man. Although there were victories aplenty for those who adventured through the ruins of Castle Greyhawk, those veterans are still trying to discover who and what this figure was. That's because nary a PC managed to catch this incredible thing, the Jeweled Man. All such speculation is to no avail, of course. Until some player's character manages to discover the truth about him, the mystery will never be revealed. That's a secret, and mystery is part and parcel of a good campaign.

Once the teams of PCs delving into the dungeons of Castle Greyhawk had made their way down to a moderate depth, all were after greater treasures. That was the natural way of things; in the original D&D and AD&D games, experience point awards were primarily based on the value of a defeated monster's treasure hoard, not on the power of the monster. Of course, XPs were given for slaying foul creatures, successful use of spells, and other heroic acts. Even the most rigorous use of sword and spell, however, was insufficient to gain the large amounts of experience points needed to gain a level. In short order, the players learned that copper was dross, silver meaningless, and even gold a middling reward at best. Platinum? A bare cut above gold. Gems, jewelry, and magic items, those were the goal of every party's explorations, the wherewithal to become more able in one's class.

It was around the dungeon's 8th level that the first bold adventurers came upon something they had theretofore only dreamed of. Tenser, Robilar, and Terik were delighted when, upon entering a large chamber, they saw a figure apparently made entirely of gold. This sight was all the more wondrous not because the man-like thing was animate, but rather because the glittering yellow metal of this figure's body was encrusted with faceted gems of all sizes and shapes. Even from a distance, it was plain that thousands of carats of diamonds, emeralds, sapphires, and rubies—the whole spectrum of precious stones—were embedded in the thing's golden body. Surely, the strange golden automaton represented millions and millions of gold pieces worth of wealth—and enough experience points to advance a large, high-level party to the next level of power.

Even as a spell was cast to keep the Jeweled Man from acting, warriors were rushing to come to grips with this marvel. Alas for the adventurers, the spell had no effect, and before the eager fighters were near, the figure was off and away, running so quickly that even *boots of speed* could not keep pace. Down a passageway went the glittering form, the party in pursuit. In all too brief a time, however, the Jeweled Man was lost, vanished in the labyrinth of the surrounding passages. Swearing to return, the adventurers went away empty handed, settling eventually for far less precious items taken from likely more fearsome opponents.

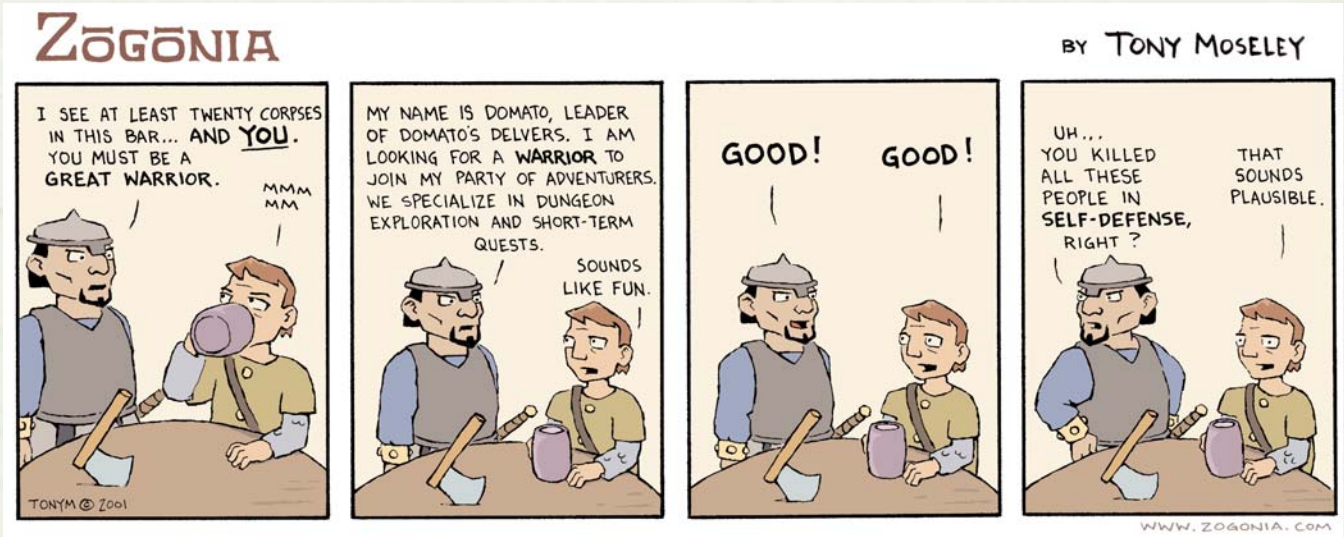
The players of course embarked on a series of expeditions comprised of both the original team and other characters—even lone PCs. Most of the groups managed to make their way to the location, and of those finding the great chamber, the majority encountered the Jeweled Man therein. Each successive encounter saw the would-be captors become more and more frustrated, more aggressive, and more mystified at their lack of success. Their reason for failing to capture the prize might well have been the close-lipped nature of the would-be plunderers.

Almost everyone knew that it seemed impossible to take the creature by surprise, but teams and individual characters kept their own counsel concerning the success of other actions. Clearly the incalculable worth of the treasure and the repute to be had from gaining it worked to diminish cooperation, the one thing that makes success in adventuring most likely.

This effect was not foreseen, but the actions of players made it easily recognizable. To reflect the attitudes of the PCs, it was natural to use innuendo to suggest one or another character was planning to capture the Jeweled Man alone. Solo adventures among the most able players were rare thereafter, as their peers were loathe to allow one of their number a chance to catch the Jeweled man alone.

To this day the begemmed thing—and I use that term advisedly, as no one has discovered exactly what it is—haunts the great chamber in the mid-levels of the dungeons of Castle Greyhawk. It has been years since any determined effort to capture the creature has been made, but the veterans of the storied times when exploration and derring-do were meat and drink to a large company still speak of it. Suggestions that it was an illusion fall flat because several different groups launched failed attempts to prove it unreal. There are growls about "DM cheating" too, but these complaints are half-hearted. Simply put, the players concerned know deep down that they never made a truly concerted effort, and each suspects they just might one day succeed.

Perhaps they will, and then the tale of that triumph will be told and retold. As it is, however, only sad stories of the one that got away are related.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MMM MM
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GOOD!
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THAT SOUNDS PLAUSIBLE.
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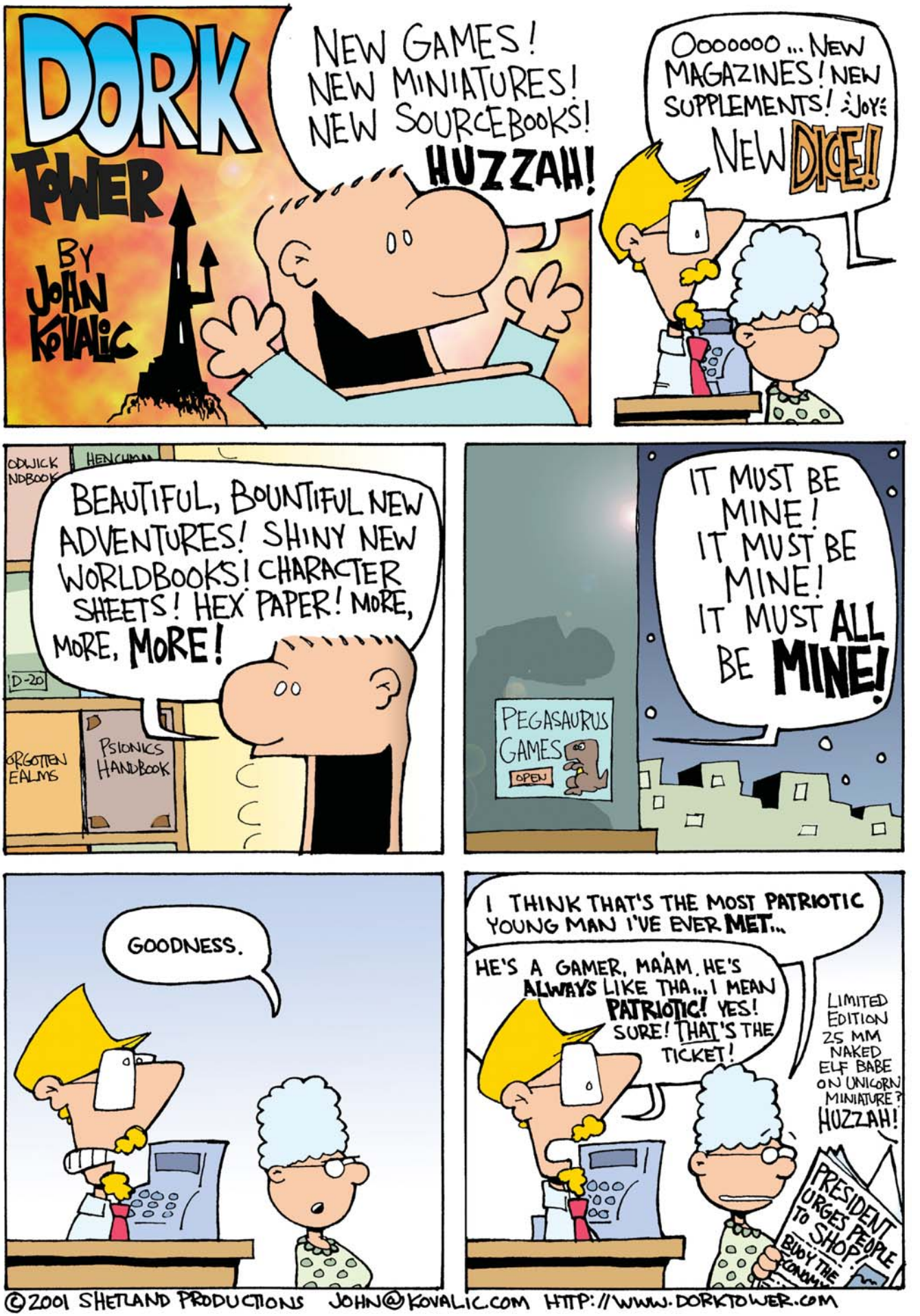
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RED SAILS
Tempests on the Steppes

D&D in the Dark Ages of Eastern Europe

by Paul Leach • illustrated by Anthony Watters

In the late Dark Ages, powerful rulers forged great kingdoms out of the Slavic tribes living between the Elbe River and the Black Sea. Hordes of ferocious Asiatic horsemen stormed across the plains to pillage these kingdoms, and fleets of Russian warrior merchants sailed the Dnieper to bargain with Constantinople. All the while, missionaries strove to bring the pagans beyond the Danube frontier into the Christian fold of the Greco-Roman Mediterranean. While unfamiliar to many D&D players, the clash between Slavic and Eurasian cultures offers as much conflict and intrigue as any DUNGEONS & DRAGONS campaign.

The Red Sails campaign, so named because of the color of the sails on ships navigating the treacherous Dnieper, takes place in Eastern Europe's Dark Ages. All the dates presented in this article are thus Anno Domini.

Living in the Dark Ages

During the Dark Ages, Eastern Europe was awash with a confusing array of ethnic and cultural groups. Describing all such groups is beyond the scope of this article, but some of the most important groups you'll need to know about are mentioned below.

The Slavs

The Slavs originated in Eastern Europe, north of the Carpathian Mountains, between the Oder and Dniester Rivers. While some tribes migrated to the Byzantine Balkans, other tribes pushed as far west as the Elbe River. The last major migration of Slavic tribes occurred in the eighth and ninth centuries, when several tribes moved east to modern Ukraine. The Slavs spoke a common language that did not begin to diversify until the tenth century. Their

language did not have a written format until the missionary efforts of Saint Cyril in the ninth century.

Warrior aristocracies ruled the Slavic tribes and kingdoms. The upper class warriors usually rode horses and wore heavy armor. The lower classes (tribal warriors from the early Dark Ages and the militias from later in the period) did not often have anything more than a shield for protection. The most common weapon was the spear, but axes and bows were also used. Byzantine military manuals noted the Slavs for their ability to set ambushes in rough terrain.

A Byzantine source described the Slavs as having red-blonde hair, but any light or medium color was possible. The men wore their hair long and grew beards or long mustaches, although some cropped the crown and left long braids over each ear in nomad fashion. Slavic people had medium to fair complexions, and most had brown or blue eyes. The men wore long tunics, loose trousers, and cloaks, while the women wore long dress shifts. Clothes were most often made of wool, sheepskin, and furs. Linen clothing tended to be white or gray.

Early Slavic Society

The barbaric society of the early Slavs was similar in many ways to the Germans and Celts. The family group was an especially important structure in barbarian society, providing protection and vengeance for its members. Beyond the family, Slavs identified themselves with the tribal structure, which was replaced by centralized principalities and kingdoms in the late Dark Ages. Royalty and the aristocratic warriors ruled at the top, while the slaves and semi-free were at the bottom. Most members of the aristocracy were born into it, but landed wealth could gain one entry to the upper classes. This was most often achieved through service to a king. Slavic society was divided as follows:

Tsar: This is the Slavic title for emperor. Only a powerful leader could take this title, such as the Bulgarian and Rus kings of the tenth century.

Knez: A knez could be the ruler of a powerful kingdom like feudal Poland, or a knez might only be the leader of a large group of tribes. These petty kings often ruled in conjunction with a council of noble warriors, called the druzhina. As these rulers began to centralize their power, the druzhina's role changed, serving the knez as a bodyguard and administering control over his territories. This transition began to occur between the seventh and ninth centuries, coinciding with the movement of Slavic populations into fortified commercial settlements.

Voivod: This is a tribal chieftain, usually the ruler of several clans. Until the centralization of power in the fledgling feudal states such as Moravia, the voivod was often the highest power in the land. The Slavic name for tribe is pleme.

Zupan: The zupan was ruler of a rodu, or clan.

Druzynnik: The members of the druzhina, the druzynikki, were aristocratic warriors. They tended to serve as heavy cavalry, a druzynnik's horse being a symbol of his status. In large feudal states, a powerful druzynnik might maintain a druzhina of his own.

Smerdy: These freeman farmers made up the bulk of the Slavic feudal population. In the feudal states they are organized into the polk, the levy militia, in times of war. The polk is similar to the Saxon fyrd.

Xolop: They were slaves, often war prisoners. Although they did not have many rights, they were regarded as members of their owning families. Historical records seemed to indicate that they were treated well in general.

Specific Slavic Groups

Obodrites and Veletians: These tribes formed small but determined kingdoms at the borders of their Germanic and Scandinavian neighbors. They rebelled in 983 against their German conquerors and maintained their independence more or less for another two hundred years. These Slavic kingdoms were the last great strongholds of paganism in Europe. These tribes were collectively known as the Wends.

Sorbs: Failing to unite and form a centralized state, these Slavic tribes were conquered by the Germans before the end of the tenth century.

Polanie, Pomeranians, and Vistulanians: The Polanie were formed from numerous tribes, and they conquered the Pomeranians and Vistulanians in the 960s under the powerful Mieszko. After the unification, all of these Slavs were called Poles.

Croats: After throwing off Avar domination in the early ninth century, the Croats then became the target of Frankish aggression and Byzantine intrigues. The Dalmatian and Pannonian Croats united under their first king, Tomislav (910-928).

Serbs: Where their neighbors, the Croats, came under Western influence, the Serbs stayed in the Byzantine political and cultural spheres. The Serbian kingdom was annexed by the Bulgarians in 925 and subsequently brought under Byzantine control during the next century. The Serbs gained independence from Constantinople in 1166.

Dregovichi, Drevlyans, Polyans, Radimichi, Severyans, Slovenes, Volyhnians, and Vyatichi: These major Slavic tribes began to migrate to the lands of modern Russia in the late eighth and early ninth centuries. Most of these tribes came under the rule of the Scandinavian/Slavic Rus by 900. The Vyatichi and the Volyhnians were absorbed by the end of the tenth century. Many of the tribes maintained their individual identities until the eleventh century, when they all became known as the Rus.

The Eurasian Nomads

The tribes of the Eurasian steppes were by no means homogenous, as their original homelands were Finland, Central Asia, Turkey, and Iran. Yet they did live similarly, and they shared traditions and customs over the centuries as tribes intermixed through alliances and conquests. The horse was paramount to these nomads, giving them distinct advantages in war and finding new land for their herd animals. Their combat tactics revolved around small groups of mounted bowmen who harassed and ambushed their enemies. The short composite bow, with its superior draw, was the favored weapon of the Eurasian horse warriors.

The Eurasian nomads spoke different languages despite mingling on the steppes beyond the Black and Caspian Seas. For simplicity, a DM can assume all the nomad cultures speak Turkish, except the Danube Bulgarians, who adopted the Slavic tongue after arriving

in the Balkans. (At least three or four language groups occur in this setting, but playability should rule over historical accuracy.)

The Eurasians had dark brown, black, or red hair. The men often cropped most of their hair, leaving braids or tangles on the sides. Long mustaches were preferred over beards. Skin color was mostly light to medium variations of red-brown, yellow-brown, or yellow. Some tribes living in the Caucasus had darker shades of brown skin. Their eyes were often dark.

Typical clothing consisted of a long, loose tunic, trousers, boots, and sometimes a cloak. Clothing material ranged from furs (fox, ermine, wolf, and bear) to silk to dyed leather. Decorated belts were signs of rank and seniority, with gold signifying royalty, followed by silver, bronze, and brass. High-ranking steppe warriors wore more than one belt to reflect their wealth and power. A nomad sometimes had tattoos of stylized animal patterns along his arms. Some warriors ritualistically scarred their faces to appear fearsome.

Specific Eurasian Hordes

Magyars: The Magyars once lived on the steppes north of the Black Sea until the Pechenegs drove them away, possibly at the request of the Khazars. They finally moved to the grassy plains past the Carpathian Mountains, in modern Hungary, around 900. They dismantled the ailing Moravian kingdom by 906 and began regular raids against the Germans within a couple of decades (although this did not stop German nobles from hiring Magyar mercenaries in their internecine struggles). The Magyar horde was decisively beaten by Otto I at Lechfield in 955. The Magyars kept relatively quiet for some time after and began to adopt a settled agricultural way of life.

Avars: The Avar Khaganate was based in the same region as the magyars during the seventh and eighth centuries, although its rule extended as far as the Baltic in the north and to the Black Sea in the east. The combined assaults of the Franks, Slavs, and Bulgarians destroyed their empire early in the ninth century.

Pechenegs: This horde served the Khazar Khaganate between the ninth and tenth centuries, gathering tribute from Slavs and other Eurasian nomads. Many Pechenegs joined the Rus army in the devastating sack of the Khazar Khaganate in 965. In 1122 they suffered a great defeat at the hands of the Byzantines, with many of them being sold into slavery. In thirty years or so, the Pechenegs would no longer exist as an independent people. Pecheneg mercenaries appeared in several East European armies, even after the demise of their hordes.

Ghuzz: The Rus defeated this horde around the middle of the eleventh century. They forced a Balkan invasion in 1064 to escape the wars on the steppes. The Ghuzz were faced with plague and famine on one side and military conflicts with the Byzantines, Pechenegs, and Bulgarians on the other. Their hordes were reduced to small tribes, subject to Pechenegs and Rus.

Khazars: The Khazars moved into the region between the Black Sea and the Caspian at the end of the sixth century. They were one of the most organized of the Eurasian nomadic confederations. They maintained healthy centers of trade, acquiring Arab silver as furs and slaves crossed through their lands. With their main cities devastated by Sviatoslav's campaigns in the late tenth century, the Khazars' political influence dwindled to nothing after a few decades.

Volga Bulgars: The Khazars split the Great Bulgaria into two groups in the seventh century. While some hordes crossed the Danube into the Balkans, other Bulgars fled farther north. The Volga Bulgars were never totally free of the Khazars even there, owing them tribute until the Rus and Pechenegs decimated their overlords in the 960s. The Volga Bulgars remained independent until 1237, when the Mongols invaded Europe.

The Rus

The Rus were Swedish Vikings who set up trading settlements along the river systems that connected the Baltic to the Caspian and Black Sea regions, probably as early as the late eighth century. They mingled with local Slavic populations and had completely mixed with the Slavic populace within a few generations, grafting Slavic and Eurasian customs to their Scandinavian roots.

Nobles and their bodyguards were usually well armed. They often wore chain armor and metal helmets. The noble warriors carried several weapons, including swords, axes, spears, and daggers. Lower-class warriors were armed with at least a spear and shield, but many also carried axes or bows.

The Rus often wore baggy, plain or striped trousers that puffed out above the knees and white tunics. They also wore boots that reached up to their knees and cloaks that they pinned at one shoulder. They loved bright colors, with red, blue, green, black, and gray being common for their cloaks, pants, and tunics. The Rus also wore fur hats, vests, and cloaks.

Their hair color tended to be blond or red, and the men wore their hair as

Eurasian Titles

The following list of "universal" ranks of the Eurasian nomad cultures simplifies the inconsistent array of titles actually held. Not all of these titles were used by all the nomad cultures, but most of the Eurasian warrior aristocracies shared similar ranks, if not the actual titles of the same name. The Rus adopted both Slavic and Eurasian titles.

Khagan: This ruler was the high king of a confederation of tribes. He was the khan of the ranking tribal horde, and his actual power over the confederacy varied. For instance, Attila's great horde returned to its separate tribal components upon his death because another leader could not be found to bind them together. The great Rus princes used this title.

Gyula: A gyula was the chief deputy to the khagan. This officer often wielded the real power. A gyula might also be called a beg.

Khan: A khan was a tribal chieftain. Voivod, a title held in common with the Slavs, was also used.

Boyar: This warrior was a member of the greater nobility. Boyars served the khan in return for food, weapons, and horses.

Bagatur: Although a member of the lesser nobility, a bagatur still ranked high enough to command warriors in a field army.

Cseled: A cseled was a member of the common people. The name refers to a servant and extends to the slave as well. A cseled was at the lowest level of society, with not much difference between the free and unfree.

other Slavic men, preferring long mustaches to beards. Upper-class warriors often shaved their scalps, mirroring the custom of some Eurasian warriors. Another tradition taken from the Eurasians was the tattooing of zoomorphic forms along their arms.

The Finns

The Finns were nomad hunters who lived in the far north and included such people as the Lapps. They lived at the edge of the Slavic and Scandinavian worlds, trading furs with the Rus. Finnish tribes were incorporated into the evolving Rus kingdoms, just like the Slavs. Scandinavians viewed them with some suspicion and credited them with powers of sorcery. In appearance they looked much like the other people of Northern Europe, although their hair and skin were often darker.

Other Finns

Balts: The Balts had a mixture of Slavic and Finnish culture, leading more settled lives.

Historical Overview of the Campaign

Although the ninth and tenth centuries offer the most dynamic time for running an Eastern Europe Dark Ages campaign, Dungeon Masters can place their campaigns anywhere between 500 and 1200. This range offers plenty of historical times, places, and figures for a DM to base a campaign, but the ascendancy of the early Rus principalities might be one of the most exciting. Their story begins with the arrival of the semi-historical Scandinavian adventurer Rurik at Staraya Ladoga in the middle of the ninth century. His descendants proved themselves worthy of a dynasty and forged a great kingdom much farther to the south in the city of Kiev. The Russian Primary Chronicle, a mostly legendary account of early Russian history, indicates a kind of glorious predestination for both the Rurikids and Kiev. This article is dedicated to highlighting the often violent and miserable circumstances surrounding the rise of the realm of the Rurikids, which stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Between the Bug and Volga Rivers, the realm of the Rurikids grew around its heart and lifeline, the Dnieper River.

The Dnieper, although not the only river route to the Black Sea, was the only river that almost touched the Baltic Sea (via the Dvina) and the stronghold/trading center of Novgorod.

As the southward slave traffic increased, the collection of Rus merchant warriors in Kiev saw a chance to win a very hard-earned prosperity. Before 900 A.D., Kiev was nothing more than a fortified settlement belonging to the Slavic Polyans, serving as a tribute collection outpost for the Khazars. Within eighty years it would become the political center of the Rus and East Slavs, and the outpost's culturally diverse population would grow to at least 20,000 (some estimates are as high as 100,000).

Although Kiev contributed much to the success of the Rurikid dynasty, they had to do more than establish themselves in this pivotal town on the Middle Dnieper; Kiev was not an obvious choice for the dominant city in the region. Despite the lure of Constantinople's markets, those willing to make the journey had to face rough waters and nomadic bandits. These risks were ultimately outweighed by the favorable trade agreements the Byzantines offered to Rus traders willing to brave the hazards of the Dnieper. Without these treaties, the expense might have been prohibitive to all but the most adventurous or desperate Rus merchants.

Despite the hazards, Kiev became a convenient port for the ship crews who traveled from the northern towns, allowing its rulers to collect tolls in addition to the tribute and slaves it gathered from the surrounding Slavic tribes. Kiev's economy attracted tradesmen and artisans who profited through trade with the Dnieper sailors.

As Kiev grew in importance, the nature of the dynasty began to transform. The settlement's earliest leaders ruled a collection of nobles and warbands, but their power was in no way absolute. Although Kiev offered great potential wealth through the riches of trade with Constantinople, Kiev's rulers were much more than controllers of a long-term business venture.

The Rurikids and Kiev strove for greatness and attained it, becoming much more than a regional power. This elevated status was mostly the result of their relationship with the Byzantine Emperors and Constantinople. Early in the tenth century they were merely a source of furs, slaves, mercenaries, and trouble to the Byzantine Empire, and

Timeline

Dates in white type are particularly relevant to a Kiev-Rus campaign.

453 Attila the Hun dies. His confederation of nomadic tribes dissolves, with many of the Huns leaving Western Europe and eventually becoming part of other Asiatic tribes.

493 Bulgars raid Byzantine province of Thrace.

517 Bulgars and Slavs raid Macedonia and Thessaly.

527 Slavic tribes begin migrating to Balkans region. They continue for the next 40 years.

533 Chilbudius, the Byzantine military commander of Thrace is killed in battle against Bulgars and Slavs.

558 Emperor Justinian agrees to pay Avars annual tribute in return for peaceful relations.

566 Avars conquer Balkan Slavs.

582 Avars and Slavic allies capture Sirmium, leading to a major Balkan invasion.

586 Khazars arrive in Caucasus.

597 Slavs settle into parts of Macedonia.

601 Priscus leads Byzantine army on major campaign against Avars and their subject allies, the Slavs and Gepids. Defeats inflicted against the barbarians in battles around the Danube and Theiss Rivers.

614 Slavs destroy Salona, the largest Adriatic coastal city in the Balkans. It is never rebuilt.

623 Frank merchant/warrior Samo leads Slavic revolt against Avars, establishing the first Slavic kingdom.

626 Constantinople unsuccessfully besieged by Avars and Slavs. Avar power in Balkans curtailed, leaving regional Slavs independent and decentralized until rise of Bulgar Khanate.

680 Bulgar Khanate established in Balkans. Bulgar hordes are pushed into the Danube regions by Khazar expansion into the steppes north of the Black Sea.

689 Justinian II breaks peace with Bulgaria and conducts a losing military campaign against them.

even then, the Rus presence in the Black Sea region was relatively small compared to the trade and wars that could be found with Constantinople's Mediterranean neighbors. However, as Kiev's commercial power grew, so to did the Rurikids' ability to influence Byzantine politics. Constantinople twice requested Rus assistance in the last half of the century, once to sunder the ambitious Danube Bulgars and again to put down a rebellion. A close, but not servile, affiliation with Constantinople increased the power of the Rurikids, especially with their acceptance of Christianity. If nothing else, Kiev and Constantinople were close enough geographically to take advantage of good relations but far enough apart to discourage sustained conflicts and attempts at conquest.

Kiev

Podol: This part of town is where the common folk lived. As Kiev began to grow as a trading center, the low land near the Dnieper began to fill with craftsmen and local merchants. Most dwellings were either mud huts or khaty, a one-room timber building insulated with clay. Many homes were built upon a thick foundation due to the flooding, and drainage channels were also built. Many properties also had a shed and were marked with wattle fences. Larger homes with earthen ramparts and palisades could be found in the Podol, but the most elaborate compounds tended to be located on the city's hills.

The Podol also contained the city's market. It was large, with shops and storage buildings lining its perimeter. The market's center contained booths and stands. A wooden idol of Volos kept watch over the merchants, artisans, and buyers until Vladimir converted to Christianity.

The Podol was fortified as early as the late eleventh century. Its main streets radiated from Starokievskaia Hill to the river's edge.

Starokievskaia Hill: This was the location of the early Khazarian outpost fort (when Kiev was known by its Khazarian name, Sambatas). As the city's importance grew as a major political center for the Rus, fortifications were expanded. Vladimir's kremlin (citadel) grew to encompass much of the hill, including the fortified households of his boyars. Until Vladimir commissioned the construction of the Tithe Church, the prince's palace was the only stone building in the city. The kremlin's thick walls were framed with timber supports and filled with earth.

Jaroslav's Town: Vladimir's son Jaroslav was responsible for adding more fortifications to the city during his reign (1036-1054). Not only did he expand the defenses of the kremlin, he extended them to protect the southern portion of Kiev. The ramparts were 65 feet wide, and they encircled an area of more than five kilometers. Jaroslav also commissioned the building of another major church in his town, the Saint Sophia. This beautiful church was modeled on the great Byzantine basilica of the same name in Constantinople.

Other Sites

Novgorod: Rus adventurers and craftsmen (mostly Swedes) began moving into the lands of the East Slavs and Volga Bulgars as early as 750. By 900, the Rus—now quite assimilated with the Slavs—had established strong political and trading centers between the Baltic and the edge of the steppes. Although

Kiev would achieve hegemony over the other principalities by Vladimir's reign, Novgorod still demanded care and respect due to its early influence. According to Arab historical sources from the ninth century, the Rus khagan of Novgorod ruled over the other Rus warbands between the Dnieper and Volga. It is unknown how much power this khagan actually wielded, but Novgorod's aristocracy was always glad to remind the Rurikid dynasty of its importance. For more information on Novgorod, see "Cities of the Ages" on page 76.

Moravia: This major Slavic kingdom was formed in 830. Weakened by internal dynastic struggles, Moravia had little chance of resisting the Magyar invasion of 906. The seventh-century kingdom of Samo was established in the same region. Czech ruler Borivoj would later create the Bohemian kingdom from the ashes of Moravia.

Bulgar Khaganate: The Danube Bulgars quickly assimilated with the Slavic population after they arrived in the Balkans in the seventh century. Their power fluctuated over the centuries, but at the beginning of the tenth century, Tsar Symeon lead his kingdom to its greatest height of power, conquering the Serbs and nearly taking the Byzantine throne. The Bulgarian kingdom was reduced to the status of a Byzantine province by the early eleventh century, after a major Rus incursion (sponsored by Constantinople) and a successful Byzantine offensive.

THE RURIKIDS

Oleg (?-913?)

Male human, Ftr10/Rog2, N

After Rurik, the next great leader of the Rus was Oleg. Much of what is written about him probably falls into the category of legend rather than history. He is credited with taking ownership of Kiev by disguising himself and his intentions to lure its leaders, Askold and Dir, into a murderous trap. Later, one version of the Chronicle states that he hung his shield on the gates of Constantinople after defeating the Byzantine forces in a great battle in the beginning of the tenth century. Byzantine sources do not record a great raid at the time, and most likely the alleged raid was fabricated to provide a reason for the treaty forged between the Rus and Constantinople in 907. This is not to say that Oleg could not have pressured the Byzantines into a trade agreement by making a nuisance of himself on the Black Sea. In epic Viking fashion, Oleg is said to have died after scoffing at a prophecy that his horse would kill him. Although he seemed safe enough while standing over the bones of his deceased mount, a venomous snake slithered out of its skull and delivered a fatal bite to Oleg. The historical Oleg might be one of the unnamed Rus leaders who died at the hands of the Pechenegs or Khazars after campaigning in the Caspian; two or three disastrous ventures in the region were recorded during the first half of the tenth century. If Oleg died during the latter one (around 943), it is quite possible he might have assisted Prince Igor during his raids against Constantinople in 941.

716 Emperor Theodosius III makes a peace treaty with Bulgars, granting them annual gifts of gold and silk as well as land in the Balkans. The treaty is kept for almost 40 years.

739 Bulgar royal family, House of Dulo, dies out. Within 20 years the Bulgar noble factions wage war against each other.

755 Emperor Constantine V begins series of campaigns to subdue Bulgaria.

783 Byzantine army begins campaign to reconquer the Peloponnese from Slavs.

791 Avar kingdom at war with Franks, Bulgars, and Slavs. The Avar kingdom is destroyed by 805.

805 Battle of Patras. Emperor Nikephorus breaks Slavic power in Greece. Franks engage the Czechs in offensive drives toward Central Europe.

808 Danes destroy Obodrite trade settlement at Reric. King Godfred orders all the merchants removed and brought to Hedeby.

811 Emperor Nikephorus and his army destroyed by Bulgars during a dawn attack on the Byzantine camp near Pliska.

830 Slavic kingdom of Moravia established by Mojmir.

830s Arabs record Rus merchants trading on the Volga River. Scandinavians were present as early as 750s.

860 Rurik, semi-legendary leader of the Rus, leads a great raid against Constantinople.

863 Greek Orthodox missionary brothers Cyril and Methodius arrive in Moravia at the request of Rastislav.

864 Bulgars convert to Christianity.

874 After decades of aggression, the Franks formally accept Moravian independence.

879 Legendary date of Oleg's capture of Kiev, as well as the year of Rurik's death. He is credited with taking the town from Varangian warlords Askold and Dir by

Igor (?-945)

Male human, Ftr9, LN

Prince Igor of Kiev is often regarded as the first truly historical ruler of the Rus. The Chronicle indicates that he was of "Rurik's blood" and that he and Oleg were kinsman, possibly father and son. This blood tie between the three seems to be an attempt in a later century to trace the dynasty's origins to a legendary figure. Regardless of any ties to Rurik, Igor tried to intimidate the Eastern Slavs and Constantinople in a grand fashion. His Black Sea campaign of 941 was a failure by most accounts, with the sparse Byzantine navy using flame-throwing devices to spray liquid fire ("Greek fire") on the Rus ships when they could catch them. Still, Igor managed to force a treaty from the Byzantines despite the spectacular defeats he suffered at their hands. Igor died while attempting to gather tribute from a resistant Slavic tribe not long after winning the treaty with Constantinople. Considering the rough nature of Dark Age politics, Igor's 20-year rule is an impressive feat.

Olga (d. 969)

Female human, Ari10, LG

Igor's wife, Olga, ruled Kiev until their son, Sviatoslav, was old enough to take the responsibility. No Rus warlords appeared to challenge the authority of Olga and her family. If their rule was not absolute, it was at least accepted by the

collection of noble Rus and Scandinavian houses of Kiev. Kiev maintained close relations with Novgorod, and young Sviatoslav was named its prince. Olga's greatest contribution to the success of the dynasty was drawing the various Rus strongholds into Kiev's sphere of influence and controlling and allying the Slavic tribes between them.

Diplomacy and good trade maintained good relations between the Rurikids and the other Rus power centers, but independent Slav princes required a stronger approach. Olga is credited with totally revising the Kievan princes' tribute system, the poludie. The poludie was the winter-long journey made by the prince and royal guard as they gathered furs, silver, and honey by sled from the Slavic tribal chieftains. Although the arrival of the prince's warband could prove intimidating to most subject chieftains, the poludie was prone to ambush by bandits or rebellious tribes. Olga decided to place pogosts, tax collection outposts garrisoned by loyal Rus warriors, in each tribal territory. A visit by the royal warband would only be necessary if the appropriate tribute was not offered.

Olga's internal political success did not extend to Kiev's foreign relations. When Olga converted to Christianity in 957, she made a combined pilgrimage and diplomatic mission to Constantinople. She was received with less respect than she felt she deserved, not even gaining audience with the emperor. Olga was not only angered at this condescending treatment, but also with Constantinople's assumption that the Rus were automatically subject to its imperial and religious dictates when she accepted Christianity. Olga attempted to balance the situation by seeking relations with the Roman Church and the German West, but gained little response from them.

Olga was a dedicated Christian. It is recorded that her body did not decay when she died, an indication of saintliness.

Sviatoslav (940?-972)

Male human, Ftr14, N

This adventurous Kievan warlord waged the most ambitious campaigns in tenth century Eastern Europe, battling successfully against several Eurasian hordes and threatening Constantinople. His first conquests were aimed at securing tribute, trade, and Arab silver. His army (a mixture of Rus, Slavs, Swedes, Finns, and Pechenegs) forced the Volga Bulgars into submission on their first expedition and then sacked the Khazarian cities of Itil and Sarkel during the second campaign. The Khazars never recovered from the devastating blows.

Impressed with his handling of the Khazars, the Byzantines offered Sviatoslav a large sum of gold if he would attack the troublesome Bulgarian Khanate in the Balkans. The Rus prince suppressed the Bulgarians with a mixture of terror and diplomacy. It is recorded that Sviatoslav was responsible for the executions of thousands of Bulgarians while allowing their Tsar Boris to remain in his own palace, although even he was subject to his Rus master. Not content with Byzantine gold and Bulgarian plunder, Sviatoslav set out to ensure Constantinople recognized his sovereignty in the Balkans by raiding regions under Byzantine rule. He stayed there for three years, thinking of Bulgaria as the true center of his kingdom.

Tiring of the Rus threat, Emperor John Tzimisces led an army against the Rus in 971. The campaign went well for the Greeks, and they pushed their enemies back toward the Danube. The Pechenegs soon deserted Sviatoslav after accepting bribes from Constantinople. After a 65-day siege at Silistria in 972, Sviatoslav came to terms in a meeting with John Tzimisces. The Rus prince admitted no surrender and offered no reparations, but agreed that the Rus would leave as allies of the Byzantine state; in return the Rus were guaranteed safety from the Pechenegs. Either of their own accord or by Byzantine instigation, the fierce Pechenegs ambushed and harried the Rus army on its way back to Kiev. Sviatoslav died on the journey, and his skull was taken as a drinking cup for the Pecheneg warlord. The cup bore the inscription, "He who covets others' property often loses his own."

The Rus-Byzantine Treaties

The concessions granted to the Rus by the Byzantine state were instrumental in transforming Kiev into the most powerful trading settlement in the region. With little expense, Constantinople gained a stable ally and, just as importantly, an invaluable source of slaves for its markets. Without these trade agreements, Kiev might not have usurped Novgorod as the pre-eminent Rus principality.

Rus merchants were not only allowed access to the city's markets, they were encouraged to stay near Constantinople's environs for an extended time. For up to six months they would receive free food and other necessities, which included ship supplies like sails and anchors. They were also given a monthly allowance and access to the public baths. The three treaties governing Rus restrictions are outlined below.

TREATY OF 907

- No Rus was allowed to bring weapons into the city.
- The Rus had to be accompanied by a Byzantine official.
- The Rus could not live within the city walls. There might have been special areas for quartering the Rus merchant warriors.

TREATY OF 911

- The Rus were not allowed to plunder any Byzantine ship.
- The Rus were required to give aid to any Byzantine ship in need.
- The Rus were required to provide mercenaries.

TREATY OF 944

- Rus merchants could buy only a limited amount of silk.
- All Rus were required to have documentation granting them safe portage before their arrival in Constantinople. The failed raiding campaign of 941 definitely influenced this provision.

Sveinald (?-975?)

Male human, Ftr10, LN

This famed warleader faithfully served three generations of Rurikids, beginning with Prince Igor. It is a fair assumption that he would have been present during the great campaign of Constantinople in 941, and he certainly accompanied Sviatoslav on many, if not all, of his conquests. Sveinald even survived the ill-fated retreat from the Danube that claimed his lord's life.

The Chronicle gives us some clues as to what this man was like. He could not have been a weak man, judging from his long career of military command. He seems to have done very well for himself and his men, all of them so richly dressed that they made Igor's men look poor in comparison. For Sveinald to have been so wealthy, he would have needed to successfully extort tribute from the Slavs, shrewdly deal with Constantinople's merchants, and actively protect his life and gains.

Sveinald also had a knack for vengeance, leading the punitive expedition against the Slavic tribe that killed Igor, finally bringing them under Olga's control. Much later, not long after the failed Balkan campaign, Sveinald was drawn into the conflict between Sviatoslav's sons, Oleg and Jaropolk (Vladimir was safely in Novgorod). Sveinald's interest in the struggle between the two brothers was fueled by the death of his son, Lyut, at the hands of Oleg. The veteran put all of his abilities at the untried Jaropolk's disposal until Oleg was buried and Jaropolk was the sole ruler of Kiev.

Although Sveinald served the Rurikids, he had interests of his own, like many other Rus nobles and adventurers. Any D&D campaign based in Kiev between 930 and 975 ought to have this active NPC encounter the player characters at some point.

Vladimir (960?-1015)

Male human, Arig/Ftr3, LN

Sviatoslav's son Vladimir would achieve supremacy of almost unbelievable magnitude by the time he turned 30 years old. As his mother was only a servant, he was an unlikely candidate for greatness, let alone the inheritor of a budding kingdom. His relatively low status would not prohibit him from ruling as it would if he had been born in later centuries, but he had two older, legitimate brothers whose claims to rulership were stronger. He was sent to Novgorod in 969 as its prince, and he stayed there until Jaropolk took Kiev for himself. Under the guidance of his ever-present Uncle Dobrynia, he fled to Scandinavia, where he presumably honed his battle skills while living with distant relatives.

When Vladimir returned in 978, it was in the company of Varangians, Swedish Vikings. His armed retainers accompanied Vladimir on little more than a promise of pay and booty when they succeeded in taking Kiev from Jaropolk. Although able to regain control of Novgorod and gather a sizeable army, Vladimir needed to establish himself as a true Rus prince. He sought the hand of Rogneda, the daughter of Rogvolod, the prince of Polotsk. Vladimir took Rogneda as his bride only after assaulting Polotsk and killing Rogvolod and his two sons.

The struggle for Kiev proved to be a challenge for young Vladimir, as his Novgorodian troops did not want to stay on campaign for a long time, and the logistics for keeping the army supplied were daunting. Treachery won the day for Vladimir, though. Blud, the Kiev garrison commander, was bribed to convince Jaropolk that he was a target of a local murder conspiracy, encouraging him to flee the town. When Jaropolk returned to Kiev some months later to discuss peace terms with Vladimir, Blud assisted in his assassination. Grand Prince Vladimir ruled Kiev until his death in 1015.

Vladimir tried to enhance his prestige with Kievans by closely associating himself with the power of the pagan gods. He had six great idols set by his hall, the foremost being Perun. The other idols were of assorted origins, including Finnish and Iranian. No doubt the pagan gods Vladimir chose were ones that were already popular in the region, reflecting the early cultural mix of Russia's heritage. It was ordered that the inhabitants of Kiev worship the idols publicly, making their sacrifices under the supervision of Vladimir or one of his subordinates. This provision of worship may or may not have worked in Vladimir's favor. It was viewed as poor etiquette to control the religious activities of the people in such a

trickery. If this event actually happened, it probably occurred some 20 to 30 years later.

894 Bulgars invade Balkans, easily defeating Byzantine forces. Emperor Leo VI persuades Magyars to attack Bulgars (the Byzantines were busy fighting against the Arabs).

896 Bulgars resume invasion, marching on Constantinople. Pecheneg horsemen join different factions at different times, but ultimately leave the Byzantines to defend themselves.

899 Magyars invade Italy and defeat Lombard army at Brenta River.

900 Magyars cross Carpathian Mountains. They destroy Moravia six years later.

900 Fortress built on Kiev's Starakievskaia Gora. Kiev served as a tribute collection outpost for the Khazars. The early Rus warbands of Kiev might have gathered tribute from the surrounding Slavic settlements on behalf of the Khazars (or made some other kind of service/tribute arrangement with them). Before the middle of the tenth century, Kiev was undoubtedly controlled by the Rus and not subject to the Khazar Khaganate.

910 German King Ludwig loses to Magyars at Augsburg.

912 Rus flotilla on the Caspian raids Muslim settlements after passage is granted by Khazars. The flotilla is ambushed by the Khazars on the return journey, and the Rus leader is killed. His name is not recorded, but it is possible this might be Oleg.

914 Tsar Symeon of Bulgaria besieges Constantinople to pressure young Constantine VII into marrying his daughter. The attempt fails but Symeon manages to control most of the Balkans.

925 Symeon captures Serbia. Two years later his troops are decimated by Croatians.

manner, but the fact that he was able to get away with it might say something about his political strength.

The Byzantine Empire and the Greek Orthodox Church proved to be the best allies for Vladimir. For military assistance against Greek rebels, Emperor Basil II promised the Kievan prince the hand of his sister Anna. Upon successfully defeating Basil's enemies at Cherson, the Emperor fulfilled his part of the bargain after Vladimir accepted Christianity and threatened to withdraw his support. The marriage endowed the Rus prince with increased credibility, money, and Greek clergy. Vladimir served as a champion of the Christian religion, serving in public rituals, donating silver to the Church, and feeding the poor. The pagan idols were removed from his residence in a big display, with Perun toppled, beaten with rods, and dragged into the river.

Vladimir's success became inextricably tied to the fortunes of the Rus people and the growing Christian movement. Although his ambitions were not quite as far-reaching as his father's, Vladimir was able to achieve more because he was able to embrace favorable events and because he did not make an effort to intimidate Constantinople to the extent Sviatoslav did.

Other Important Figures

Attila the Hun

Human male, Ftr17, NE

Although Attila belongs more to the history of the Late Roman Empire, he and his hordes of horse archer nomads deserve a place among the warlords of this period. In 445 he murdered Bleda, his brother, to become sole khagan of the Hunnish tribes and their Sarmatian and Germanic subjects. For years he seemed content to plunder and demand tribute from the Eastern Roman Empire, until he had an offer for an even greater reward from Honoria, the sister of the West Roman emperor, Valentinian. She offered her hand in marriage to him if he would save her from an undesired wedding, and Attila felt that he deserved much of the Empire as her dowry. It is also quite possible the imperial family was intriguing with Attila to replace Aetius, the Roman military commander of Gaul, a man Valentinian needed, but feared. Attila and his great army invaded Gaul in 451, on the pretext of protecting Rome's interests from the federate Visigoth kingdom residing in that province. An epic battle resulted, probably in the vicinity of Chalons, and Attila was beaten but allowed to escape. Despite this setback, the Hun khagan attacked Italy next, but had to end this campaign due to disease and starvation. He died shortly thereafter, on the night of his wedding to another bride. Some rumors proclaim that Attila was actually murdered by some of his noble retainers because his leadership had devastated the horde.

Years before Attila's failed attempts in the West, he dealt with Roman diplomatic missions from Constantinople. He was described as very humble looking, although he maintained a proud bearing. He did not decorate himself with large amounts of jewelry as did the other Hunnish nobles. He was clever, but could be very direct. Judging from these personal accounts and the political and military actions taken by Attila, it seems that he was a man who had a knack for correctly sizing up his opponents, even if he did overreach himself in the end. No other leader could replace the great khagan, and the Hunnish tribes separated.

Constantine (Cyril)

Human male, Ari5/Exp10, LG

And Methodius

Human male, Ari5/Exp8, LG

These two brothers were influential Eastern Orthodox missionaries in the Slavic world of the ninth century. Emperor Michael and Patriarch Photius sent them to Moravia in 862 in hopes of drawing the Central European Slavs into the spheres of the Byzantine Empire and its church. Ratislav, the Moravian king, had made the request for Eastern Orthodox missionaries to

counter military and ecclesiastical pressure exerted by the Roman Orthodox Franks.

The brothers were the right choice for the task. They had grown up in Thessalonica, home to numerous communities of Slavs. Constantine (827-869) and Methodius (825-885) learned to speak Slavonic and presumably were familiar with Slavic culture. Each of the brothers held important positions within the Eastern Orthodox Church and had carried out successful diplomatic missions to the Khazar Khaganate and the Islamic Arabs. Constantine developed an alphabet for the Slavonic tongue, called Glagolithic (after his death the alphabet was simplified, and renamed Cyrillic, taken from Constantine's monastic name). With this tool, liturgical texts were translated from Greek to Slavic. Under the mission of Constantine and Methodius the religious services for the Slavs were held in Slavonic, which was unusual at the time. Most of the Christian world held services in either Latin or Greek, with Moravia under Ratislav and England under Alfred the Great being the biggest exceptions.

Although Central Europe would be lost to the Eastern Orthodox Church not long after the deaths of the brothers, the lands did remain Christian. The Cyrillic alphabet was the other cultural legacy the missionaries left for the Slavic people, giving a platform for the Russian alphabet.

Kroum

Human male, Ftr12, LN

Kroum was the Khagan of the Danube Bulgars from 803 to 814, and he ensured that the Bulgarian Khaganate would rival the Franks and Byzantines as a major power. He conquered the Balkans as far west as Serbia and pushed into modern Hungary upon the collapse of the Avar Khaganate. In 807 he moved against the Byzantines, taking Thracia and Macedonia. In 811 Emperor Nikephorus I led a Byzantine army into Bulgar territory to teach Kroum a lesson and sacked the capital city of Pliska. Kroum fled to the mountains, with Nikephorus in pursuit. Kroum ambushed his enemies in a dawn attack against their camp, killing Nikephorus and routing his army into a river. Nikephorus' skull was made into a drinking cup for Kroum.

On matters of state, Kroum began to codify laws. Using captive Greek

Symeon dies of grief.

933 Two Magyar armies invade German territory after King Henry refuses to pay tribute. Both Magyar armies are defeated.

941 Prince Igor leads a raiding campaign against Constantinople to gain favorable trade status. The Rus flotilla is largely destroyed. Despite the losses suffered by the Rus, the Byzantines offer them a new treaty by 944.

943 A Rus army besieging the Muslim town of Barda on the Caspian Sea abandons its campaign after widespread sickness takes a toll on the expedition.

945 Prince Igor is killed while gathering tribute from the Slavic Drevylians. His wife Olga controls the Rus kingdom until their son Sviatoslav comes of age.

955 Magyar power broken in Western Europe after great defeat at Lechfield by Otto I.

956 Semi-legendary Ghuzz chieftain Seljuq and his followers accept employment with Khazars.

957 Olga formally accepts Christianity while visiting Constantinople.

964 Sviatoslav begins campaigns against Volga Bulgars and Khazar Khaganate.

965 Rus sack Itil and Samandar, the major cities of the Khazar Khaganate.

966 Polish King Mieszko accepts Christianity.

967 Sviatoslav begins campaign against the Danube Bulgars at the request of Constantinople. He is driven from Bulgaria in 971 by Byzantine forces and dies on the retreat. While her son is campaigning in the Balkans, Olga has to lead the Kievans through an unsuccessful Pecheneg siege.

969 Rus crush Bulgaria at Constantinople's request. The Rus fail to depart Balkans, leading to war in 971.

970 Vladimir is declared Prince of Novgorod. Vladimir flees to

architects, he had several palaces built, with much of the stone material taken from existing churches and villas.

Mieszko

Human male, Ftr15, NG

Mieszko was the founder of the kingdom of Poland, ruling from 960 to 992. He was the ruler of the Polanie tribe, but he quickly spread his rule over the two other major Slavic tribal confederations, the Pomeranians and the Vistulanians. It is recorded that he supported a druzhina of 3000 men and that he maintained control of his territories through hill fort strongholds. Mieszko's home fortress and ruling center was located at Gniezno.

Poland showed great promise during the reign of Mieszko. He was no doubt aided initially by the trend toward consolidation among the assorted Slavic tribal kingdoms that had been occurring in his region since the ninth century. Mieszko obviously understood the political significance and benefits of associating himself with Christianity, and he established a bishopric in Poznan in 968. He minted coins like the other powerful Christian rulers of the time, such as Vladimir the Great of Russia and Boleslav of Bohemia. The Polish kingdom was able to resist the aggression of the German Ottonians, and Miesko's successor, Boleslav the Brave, was able to proclaim himself King of Poland, due in no small part to the hard work and fortune of the state's founder.

Samo

Human male, Ftr11, CG

This Frankish warrior/merchant established the first true Slavic kingdom, ruling from 623 to 658. Samo and his band travelled to Central Europe seeking trade with the Avar-ruled Slavs (somewhere in the area of Moravia and Bohemia). He arrived as the Slavs began a revolt against their harsh masters and they asked Samo to lead them. Within a few years, Samo and the Slavs had broken the Avar's dominion over their lands, and the Slavs elected the Frank to be their king. He took twelve wives and had dozens of sons and daughters.

Samo's kingdom still had outside dangers to deal with. The Frankish king Dagobert tried to bring the new Slavic kingdom under his control, eventually invading. The Slavs defeated Dagobert at a hill fort called Wogastisburc, keeping Frankish interests in check until Samo's

death. Two centuries later, the Moravian kingdom would rise from the same area.

Symeon

Human male, Ari11, LN

Symeon led Bulgaria to its height of grandeur (892-927). He patronized Byzantine culture and art, ordering the building of many churches and palaces. He modeled his government after the Byzantine state, installing a centralized bureaucracy, and enforcing taxation. The Bulgarian Khaganate still only mimicked the great empire; in reality, the nobility still controlled the provinces outside of Pliska. Although taxes were gathered, it was usually in the form of foodstuffs and other material goods, not currency.

Symeon made a bid for the Byzantine Empire's throne, besieging Constantinople between 914 and 924. He hoped to pressure the young Emperor Constantine VII into marrying his daughter, although his gamble failed when the young man married the daughter of Romanus Lecapenus. Symeon would not put his imperial pretensions aside and proclaimed himself the Tsar (Emperor) of the Bulgars. The clergy of Bulgaria also became independent of the Byzantine Church.

The Ships

Although the Viking longship and knarr (the D&D keelboat) were flat-bottomed craft, making them ideal for river travel, smaller ships were required for the Dnieper journey. Longships and other larger vessels were acceptable for deep penetration of Europe's other river systems, but the hazardous obstacles of the Dnieper made those ships undesirable. Even though the Rus constructed portages (timber-lined trails) near the worst rapids to assist in moving boats by land, the sheer size of a regular knarr prevented easy portage; the effort and time to move such a boat would have exposed the crew to unnecessary risk at the hands of Pecheneg marauders. For their ventures on the Dneiper, the Rus adopted and modified monoxyla, a local Slavic river craft.

Monoxyla: This small craft is similar in build to the knarr, but smaller, with most of them measuring between 20 and 40 feet in length, and about 10 feet in width. Although a monoxyla has a small sail, it is often propelled by oar. The crew numbers between four and eight, and the cargo capacity is about five tons or 40 men. It has a speed of about 1-1/2 miles per hour. They cost 500 gp each.

The name monoxyla is derived from the keel being one piece of wood, but this has sometimes been interpreted that the monoxyla were simple wooden dugouts. It is doubtful that dugouts would have been capable of meeting the Rus' mercantile requirements for transporting goods. Red seemed to be the favorite color to paint the monoxyla.

Playing in The Dark Ages

Character Races

Most characters should be human; nonhumans should remain rare and startling. Ancient historians often referred to the different people of Europe as separate races, so human characters might well identify themselves as belonging to a certain "race," even though the ethnic groups are all human and most of them are essentially the same ethnicity.

Nonhuman Races

Ludki: These dwarves reside in isolated communities in the hills and mountains of Central and Eastern Europe. Their appearance and abilities are the same as standard D&D dwarves, except they have an affinity for divination magic. Although they do not maintain close relations with humans now, the ludki are credited with teaching mankind the use of stone long ago. Ludki are often lawful good, but neutral good and lawful neutral are not unusual.

In addition to the standard dwarven racial traits, all ludki have a +2 racial bonus to Scry checks. They cannot use Scry untrained.

Trolls: The trolls of Scandinavian legend are nothing like D&D trolls. In appearance they are much like D&D ogres, although they usually dress much better and prefer normal clothes compared to worn, smelly pelts. Trolls are not quite as savage as ogres, although they can be brutes. They are more dangerous because they are smarter and practice magic. They are usually chaotic neutral.

Scandinavian Trolls are often encountered alone or with small family groups. Trolls do not particularly like humans, but they can occasionally be found serving in a powerful chieftain's warband as a champion or sorcerer. Trolls are most often encountered in lonesome regions in the Baltic and Russia.

Players wishing to play scandinavian trolls should use the statistics listed for ogres in the *Monster Manual* and refer to the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for the rules to use monsters as characters. Scandinavian trolls (ogres) have level equivalency of +5.

Trollborn: The trollborn are human/troll halfbreeds. They have the same sullen temper of their troll parent, but they are as likely to be encountered in the isolated wilderness as they are among normal human society. Players wishing to play trollborn should use the same character creation information as listed for half-orcs in the *Player's Handbook.*

Character Classes

Barbarians: This class is appropriate for Slavic tribal warriors until the seventh or eighth century, but it should become rare as the Slavic migrations come to an end. Later, Finnish warriors and Scandinavian berserkers are acceptable. The class is not really right for the Eurasian nomads, who were known more for their horsemanship and archery than battlelust.

Bards: Although they do not quite fit the traveling minstrel archetype of Medieval fantasy campaigns, they do exist. The Scandinavian/Germanic skalds played in the halls of chieftains and kings throughout this period. Some were associated with a particular lord's warband, while others performed for any prince who would reward them with gold or other gifts. Common Perform skills include chant, drums, flute, harp, pan pipes, and zither.

Clerics: The pagan priests of the Slavs, Eurasians, and Finns are fully detailed in the mythology article "Bright Sun, Mother Earth." Most clerics should be tribal shamans, although some might be specifically dedicated to one particular deity. Christian priests, either converts or missionaries from the Frankish and Byzantine Empires, could also appear.

Druids: This class is only acceptable for use by Finnish characters.

Fighters: As with most historical campaigns, this class is the predominant one.

They can be tribal warriors, the aristocratic bodyguard of a chieftain or king, militia levies, or mercenaries.

Monks: The monk class might make an appearance, but not very often. Merchant caravans from the Far East traveled to the edge of Eastern Europe, and it is possible that a monk might be found among one of them.

Paladins: These holy warriors are not indigenous to Eastern Europe at this time. Paladins would be outsiders from Frankish or German lands, appearing at the time of the Crusades. Keep in mind that although historically the Christian Germanic warlords fought to abolish the pagan Slavic holdouts in the Baltic, these warriors would not necessarily be categorized as paladins. Paladin characters might work best as missionaries to the pagan Slavs.

Rangers: Rangers have their place in this campaign setting, as there are plenty of enemies to be found in the great wilderness of Eastern Europe. A character can choose a Favored Enemy to be human (without the requirement to be evil) as long as the enemy is from another culture. A Slavic ranger might choose Eurasians, Rus, or Finns, for example.

Rogues: Outright thieves will not be tolerated in Dark Age society, but with the customizing that the *Player's Handbook* allows, a rogue character could make her way in the world of warriors, possibly as a scout or raider. A rogue can certainly find other, less militaristic roles to fill, such as diplomat or merchant. Guilds of rogues probably only exist in the bigger cities of the Byzantine Mediterranean.

Shamans: Shaman is a new class introduced in *Oriental Adventures.* You do not need to use shamans to run a Red Sails campaign, but the class is particularly suitable to represent the taltos. The taltos is a shaman who leads his tribe through the wisdom of the gods and ancestor spirits. He gains his powers of divination and enchantments through ritualistic trances and spirit journeys. Although his powers are strong, they are hard won, and his travels in the Other World are not always successful. The taltos is most common in Eurasian nomad cultures, but this spellcaster might be found among the Finns and Slavs.

Sorcerers: Russian folklore has its share of spellcasters that fit the sorcerer class description. Sorcerers should not be common, though, and most people will be in awe of them.

Wizards: Wizards should be rare, but they could certainly exist in pagan Eastern Europe. Considering the lack of literacy before the arrival of Christianity, most of their study would revolve around magical and religious symbols (similar in ways to Germanic and Norse runes, but not used for spelling for the most part). Like sorcerers, they will be given respect or fear.

Scandinavia in 972 after his older brothers begin a blood feud, leaving Jaropolk in control of Kiev.

972 Rus army is successfully besieged at Silistria by Byzantines. Prince Sviatoslav agrees to peace treaty and leaves Bulgaria. The Rus army is destroyed by Pechenegs before it reaches Kiev.

980 Vladimir becomes sole ruler of the Rus after Jaropolk's assassination.

981 Vladimir begins four years of military campaigns, primarily attempts to subjugate the Slavic tribes northeast and northwest of Kiev. An indecisive venture against the Volga Bulgars is attempted in 985.

982 Slavs revolt against German rule and regain territories east of the Elbe River.

988 Vladimir accepts Christianity and marries Anna, sister of Emperor Basil II of Constantinople.

991 Intermittent wars with the Pechenegs lead Vladimir to fortify settlements and outposts along the southeastern reaches of his kingdom.

1002 Henry II of Germany goes to war against Boleslav Chobry of Poland. The conflict lasts until 1018.

1014 Basil II defeats Bulgar army at Belasitsa. The Byzantines blind 15,000 Bulgars before releasing them.

1015 Vladimir dies. His twelve sons begin a bitter struggle for the Kievan throne. The war of succession involves nearly every continental foreign power except the Byzantine Empire. Jaroslav and Mstislav declare peace and divide Rus lands after the other brothers have been murdered, killed in battle, or imprisoned.

1016 Rus and Byzantine armies attack the dwindling kingdom of the Khazars.

1018 Kievan Rus and Poles battle Novgorodian Rus at Bug River.

Character Wealth

Currency is not as prevalent in a historical Dark Ages campaign, though it does exist. The most common type of coin in Eastern Europe was the Arab silver dirham, reaching the Slavs after passing through Constantinople or the Khazar Empire. Slavic and Eurasian kingdoms began minting their own silver coins as well during the tenth century, although the Khazars began somewhat earlier. Gold coins were rare. The standard D&D values for gold and silver pieces should be used.

Much of a character's wealth should come from material goods such as furs, jewelry, and any number of mundane and unique crafted items. A new treasure to introduce is the grivna, a torc-like collar worn by Slavic and Eurasian nobility. They were metal, made of iron, copper, silver, or gold. Battlefield loot such as chainmail and swords should be treated as something very valuable, not just debris. Agriculture is another source of wealth for characters, in the form of crops and livestock.

WEAPONS & ARMOR

The full range of armor and weapons available in a normal D&D fantasy campaign will be restricted in a Dark Ages campaign.

Weapons: The rapier and polearms are not available. The crossbow, while it exists, is not normally used during this period. Most exotic weapons have no place in a Dark Ages campaign, although whips, nets, and lassoes might be acceptable exceptions.

Armor: The heaviest armor available is chainmail. As a cosmetic note, suits of chainmail during this period are usually coats, similar to the description given for scale mail in the *Player's Handbook.*

Running a Red Sails Campaign

It is not hard to think of the uncharted forests of Dark Ages Europe as being frightening places, where human settlements were isolated and spirits and other creatures hid, but serious consideration should also be given to the steppes of southern Russia. The DM should try to reinforce the feeling of the sheer immensity of those rolling plains by giving the players the sense that they are in a world made up of only grass and sky and nothing before or after. When crossing the steppes, there are few places to hide. The characters will need to be able to outdistance or outfight their enemies.

As much as the steppes should play some part of an Eastern Europe campaign, the importance of wilderness adventures in general needs to be established. The usefulness of Eurasian nomad characters is diminished if they do not get a chance to demonstrate their horsemanship skills and feats, and the flavor of the campaign will never be as good as it could be without their inclusion. Worst of all, players who have chosen nomad characters will likely be frustrated at their lack of participation. This does not mean that all, or even most, of the campaign's adventures need to take place in great, wide spaces of grassland. Opportunities for waterborne adventures might present themselves, considering the importance of the river routes that connected the Baltic to Byzantine and Khazarian trading cities. The trackless forests mentioned earlier are a good place for adventurers to find trouble as well.

DMs do not have to neglect the classic dungeon crawl either. It can appear in different forms, the most common being hill forts and walled settlements. Caves are always a good choice, and they can serve as lairs for outlaws or fantastic creatures. Barrow mounds, although not complex, can offer adventure to those willing to loot the treasure of the dead or undead. A campaign that is set in the Balkans can make use of the diminished Greco-Roman cities, many of them sparsely populated, with ruins to explore.

Players wanting to spice up their characters' lives with city adventures should probably go to Constantinople or one of the many active trading cities on the coasts of the Black Sea or the Mediterranean. These markets and the types of people they draw (thieves, smugglers, and the like) should provide player characters with something unlike what they normally experience in the barbarian lands outside of the Byzantine Empire.

Dnieper Adventures

The Dnieper River posed hazards to the Rus and Slavs who sailed the 400 miles from Kiev to the Black Sea, making it an excellent location for D&D adventures. The following description of the Rus' journey originates from accounts compiled for the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus in the mid-tenth century.

In late spring a flotilla gathered in Kiev, sailors and ships coming from as far away as Novgorod. The going was relatively easy for the fur and slave traders for the first half of the expedition, but the third quarter led to loss of life and profit as the Rus attempted to navigate the Dnieper's rapids. The flotilla had to face no less than seven rapids, some so fierce they had no choice but to take their boats out of the water and carry them overland. When the boats could be left in river, the sailors still had a hard task. The ships had to be guided through the shallows by men in waist deep water clinging to the wooden hulls, while other crewmen used poles to push the craft along.

The fourth section of rapids, called Aeifor after the pelicans living on its boat-crushing stones, was the most difficult. Rus sailors dragged and carried their boats six miles to get past its fearsome waters. Vigilant scouts were needed here, as Pecheneg horsemen would often ambush the strained sailors along this stretch of the Dnieper. The seventh section, located at a ford, was also prone to Pecheneg banditry. As the flotilla neared the Black Sea, the sailors were able to beach their craft on islands to repair and refit before continuing along the seacoast to Bulgaria and Constantinople.

Of course, the player characters do not have to join the annual flotilla to sail to Constantinople. Surely traffic flowed up and down the river most of the year. The PC's will not enjoy the safety of numbers (fleets might number between 200 and 500 craft), but probably fewer Pecheneg bandits will be waiting for them.

The DM should prepare random and planned encounters for a lengthy wilderness adventure such as this. Shortly after leaving Kiev, the Dnieper leaves the forests and enters the steppes. Some Slavic villages can be encountered near the river, as well as Pecheneg encampments. Pecheneg bandits and possibly Rus pirates should pose threats to the adventurers. Game and fish might become important to PCs who have lost their supplies. Dawn Ibach's "Miscellaneous Mishaps: Roads & Rivers" article from *Dragon Magazine* #275 can be easily adapted for a historical campaign.

Natural obstacles such as sandbars, rocks, and rapids must be negotiated as well. They can slow a journey down by a few hours or end it all together.

Dark Age Themes and Conflicts

Forging the Kingdom: The characters could be members of a warband struggling on behalf of their lord to conquer their neighbors. They might spend much of their time engaged in small skirmishes and raids, although great battles should probably occur at some time. Characters might be sent on diplomatic missions to enlist allies or collect tribute.

Pagans vs. Christians: The characters might serve as missionaries for the Eastern Orthodox or Roman Orthodox Church, or they might be pagans trying to prevent the end of their traditional ways. Pagans might also be against the Christian faiths because they see the missionaries as tools of the Byzantine and Frankish Empires. The Eastern and Roman Churches might also see each other in the same way, and antagonistic passions could erupt from doctrinal disputes. Central Europe, from the Adriatic to the Baltic, was a battleground of competing interests for the two churches. A good mixture of conflict and alliance can occur between the three factions, even within the character group itself.

Dynastic Wars of Succession: Family feuding takes on a greater significance as heirs to the great kingdoms of Eastern Europe fight to take the ruling

throne. Wars, assassination, and imprisonment were the best methods of attaining power when a clear line of succession was not established (and sometimes if it was). Vladimir the Great's path to supremacy looks relatively calm compared to the struggles of his twelve sons. When the wars and murders finally ended, only two remained alive and free, and the wars had drawn political and military interest from nearly every great power in Europe except Byzantium.

Friend or Foe of the Empire: The characters might serve in a mercenary company, or they might be part of a tribal alliance with Constantinople. They fight purely local wars against the enemies of the Byzantine Empire or they become part of an expedition in the Mediterranean or Asia Minor, fighting Goths, Vandals, or Arabs. Any ally of Constantinople should always beware, as many of her destroyed enemies were former paid allies.

As an enemy of the Byzantine Empire, the characters could be part of a raiding band of Eurasians, or they might even be part of the Slavic conquest of the Balkans during the early migrations. The Bulgarian Khaganate proved to be troublesome to Constantinople until it was finally crushed in the eleventh century. The Rus princes carried out wars and raids against the city and its Black Sea holdings, balanced with periods of trade and peace.

Armed Merchants: A good deal of trade existed between the barbarians and the great empires. Furs and slaves were commodities brought from Eastern Europe to Mediterranean markets. Most of the barbaric tribes desired quality weapons from the Franks and Byzantines, and they often had to be smuggled to the Slavs and Eurasians. Arab merchants and their silver dirhams made journeys from Spain and Asia Minor to trade with the barbarians living beyond the old frontiers of the Roman Empire. Characters willing to become merchants should find plenty of profit and danger no matter where they seek their business. Perhaps they might become involved in local politics, like Samo the Frank, and create their own small kingdom.

Exodus: The Dark Ages of Eastern Europe are filled with the migrations of Slavs and Eurasians seeking better lands, relief from their enemies, or both.

	In the Mediterranean, Basil II conquers most of the Balkan kingdoms.
1024	Boleslav officially accepts crown as king of Poland.
1036	Jaroslav becomes sole ruler of Rus after Mstislav dies in a hunting accident.
1043	Vladimir Iaroslavich, prince of Novgorod, leads the last Rus flotilla against Constantinople. The campaign is a dismal failure.
1064	Ghuzz horsemen suffer defeat in Russia and escape to Balkans to face the Bulgars, hunger, and disease.
1147	Bohemia and Poland ally with Danes and Germans to pillage pagan Baltic tribes.
1164	Byzantine Empire passively recognizes Hungarian seizure of Dalmatia and Croatia.
1166	Under the leadership of Stephen Nemanja, Serbia revolts against Byzantine Empire.
1168	Last major pagan stronghold destroyed by Danes at Arkona on the island of Rugen.
1184	Pomerian pirates under Bohuslav are defeated near Koos. Baltic piracy ended.
1185	Bulgaria becomes independent of Byzantine Empire.

During the fifth and sixth centuries, Slavic tribes pushed into the Balkans and to the edge of Western Europe with the nomadic Avars right behind them. Great Bulgaria was split by the Khazars, with one group moving north up the Volga River and the other horde establishing itself in the Balkans not long after the Slavic conquests. The Magyar drive into Central Europe in the late ninth and early tenth centuries was instigated by the depredations of the Pechenegs, who drove them away from their home north of the Black Sea.

Adventure Ideas

The Lost Hoard

A Rus merchant who struck it rich in Constantinople lost his life and his ship filled with silver and gold somewhere along a particularly dangerous stretch of the Dneiper. No one has claimed this sunken treasure, but the treacherous waters and bandit horsemen have claimed many treasure seekers.

Malevolent Trickster

A hag or leshii has been using its stealth and disguise abilities to escalate a conflict between neighboring villages. At first stolen cattle began showing up in innocent men's herds, and then farmsteads appeared to be burned in retaliation. A murder is the latest outrage, and each village is ready to slaughter the other.

Nightriders

A vampire cleric leads skeletal nomad horsemen by night, raiding and pillaging frightened villages. The tireless cavalry bury themselves before dawn, while their wicked master and his nightmare mount hide elsewhere in case some enemies are foolhardy and fast enough to track them before the next dusk. The vampire rests at any number of barrow mounds and abandoned villages on the Black Sea steppes.

Warlords

The PCs serve in a warband during a bitter territorial conflict over tributary villages, where warfare is characterized by raids and skirmishes perpetrated by the household guards of any number of petty chieftains. The new *Dungeons & Dragons Chainmail* rules are perfect for this type of conflict.

Winter Reckoning

The PCs must collect tribute owed to their lord by the lesser chieftains of the region. The PCs play the role of diplomats, enforcers, and guards as they gather furs, honey, wax, silver, and hostages as they make their rounds. Some chieftains are not forthcoming with their dues, and others only wish to ambush the treasure-laden PCs on their return journey.

Getting Started

If you want a quick start for your Red Sails campaign, check out the adventure, "Rivers of Blood," in *Dungeon Magazine* #89. This Red Sails adventure is designed for 4th-level PCs, but it can be easily altered to allow for parties of 1st through 7th level.

RED SAILS
Bright Sun, Mother Earth

by Paul Leach • illustrated by Mike Dutton

Christianity overwhelmingly replaced European paganism during the Dark Ages, with aggressive missionary efforts from Rome and Constantinople converting most of Eastern Europe during the Ninth and Tenth Centuries. Pagan enclaves managed to survive along the Baltic coast for a few centuries more, but their old religions passed away under the military domination of their Christian neighbors. This article details some of the major pagan gods of Eastern Europe as well as the religious beliefs and practices of the pre-Christian Slavs and Eurasian nomads.

Pagan Shamans

The role of a pagan shaman in Dark Ages society might vary between mystical wise man and strong, influential leader. Their main function was to lead religious ceremonies, answer questions through divinations, and advise the population on religious matters.

Historically, most shamans were not primarily dedicated to one god or goddess. Similar to NPC adepts, these types of spiritual leaders focus strongly on the community, but this should not prevent them from adventuring any more than clerics who are devoted to a patron deity.

Player character clerics can choose to worship a specific patron deity listed in the pantheon below, but most of the clerics in the campaign should worship the pantheon as a whole. Clerics without a patron deity can select any two domains they wish, but they can only select an alignment domain (such as Good) if their alignment matches the domain.

Pagan Slavic Beliefs

The title of this article is derived from the descriptive names the Slavs gave to their deities of the sun and earth, Svarog and Mokosh. These deities were arguably the most important to the ancient Slavs, but they were not the only ones revered.

The Slavic gods controlled the elemental forces of nature and all aspects of life. Ceremonies were held to honor the gods and ask for their favor at important times of the year, mirroring the cycle of the seasons. Minor spirits of nature played an important part in the Slavs' lives (refer to the domovoi, leshii, rusalka, and vodyanoi in "Fell &t Forlorn"). Ancestor worship was practiced as well, but not to the extent that it was practiced by the Eurasian nomads, with whom the Slavs shared their early history.

The Slavs carved wooden and stone idols. The Idols of gods that had many powers or mighty strength were often given multiple heads. This reflects an ancient concept of the gods, going all the way back to the Slavs' Indo-European roots. Most often an idol was placed upon a tall post and set inside the circular perimeter of a shallow moat within a sacred grove or near a spring, lake, or river. Timber temples housed other idols, although this practice might have only come about during the late Dark Ages. Shamans usually maintained small bonfires at these sites, with several fires burning in the dry ditches surrounding the outdoor idols or within the confines of the wooden temples.

The Slavs believed in an afterlife, and the deceased were buried or cremated along with important worldly goods they might need in the Other World. Wealthy warriors were buried with weapons, armor, and treasure. A wife or a slave might also be ritually murdered and buried or cremated with the deceased. Christianity changed these practices, actively opposing the burial of material wealth (and other family members and servants). The dead were honored, and their spirits were said to watch over the living.

Tribal shamans acted mainly as spiritual leaders, allowing warriors to rule in worldly matters. Toward the end of the pagan period, the shamans became more important. The last holdouts against Christianity in the Baltic were facing a strong political and cultural battle against their Germanic neighbors, and these struggles were inseparable from the religious conflict.

The Temple at Rugen

The island of Rugen served as a major political, religious, and mercantile center for the Baltic Slavs. Although Rugen boasted an active trading community, it was the island's temple fortress at Arkona that gained far-reaching notoriety. During the fall harvest rites, a great market was held, drawing kings and merchants who sought prophecies from Svantovit (gifts were required). A white horse often assisted in determining the success of proposed military ventures by walking across a path of spears set flat on the ground. If the horse did not disturb the shafts, it was considered a good omen.

The fortress was situated on a promontory on the northern side of the island, protected by a thick earthen rampart and fortified gate and tower on its land side and high cliffs on its seaside. The temple itself was a rectangular building, consisting of inner and outer walls of upright timber. A large, four-headed idol of Svantovit sat in the middle, enclosed by hanging tapestries. The wooden idol had a silver mustache and held a large cup and a greatsword. Three hundred horsemen served the god, guarding the temple and sacrificing plunder gained from wars and raids.

Rugen and the temple fell to King Waldemar and the Danes in 1168.

Eurasian Pagan Beliefs

The Eurasian tribes of the steppes believed that the world around them was controlled by numerous greater and lesser divinities, just like the Slavs. They venerated their ancestors by worshipping clan animal spirits, and a reference to the ancestor spirit often implied all the members of the clan who had passed away and were now part of the founding spirit. Most often the animal was a bird of prey, such as an eagle or falcon, but other birds and animals were revered. Swans, ducks, owls, horses, elk, and bears were just a few of the other common clan spirits worshiped throughout Central Asia and Eastern Europe. The clan's foundation story begins when the animal transforms into a human to create the first people of the clan.

The Eurasians carved totems dedicated to their clan spirits. The wooden or stone totems were sometimes mounted on poles, planted as the clan made its way through its grazing territories. Other totems were kept in a sacred hut, tent, or wagon. Small metal totems were made as well.

NPC Eurasian clerics usually choose from the Animal, Healing, Knowledge, Travel, and War domains. PC Eurasian clerics can select any two domains they wish but they can only select an alignment domain (such as Good) if their alignment matches the domain.

Finnish and Balto-Slavic Pagan Beliefs

Living at the edge of the Scandinavian and Slavic worlds, the Finns and Balts developed beliefs similar to other Northern European cultures. The settled and semi-settled tribes' religious practices were probably not dominated by ancestor worship, but like the Slavs, they did not do away with it. Nomadic tribes such as the Saami and the Lapps maintained a stronger tradition of ancestor-worshipping shamanism, although all of them worshiped natural divinities.

The East European Pantheon

Instead of presenting separate pantheons for the Slavs, Eurasians, Finns, and Balts, their most prominent deities are presented as a whole. Several gods held a regional appeal that crossed cultural boundaries, which should not be too surprising considering the polytheistic nature of pagan Europe. Not all of the divinities listed below were worshiped throughout all of Eastern Europe, but any geographic restrictions are noted. Eastern European PCs might even worship Norse gods, depending on their proximity to Scandinavia or Scandinavian settlements.

Dazhbog

Dazhbog is the lawful good sun god of the Eastern Slavs. Depicted as either an aspect of the great creator god Svarog or as one of Svarog's sons, Dazhbog is quite popular, especially in Kiev, where he joins a select group of deities that form the pantheon of Vladimir's pagan state religion. Legends state that he rides across the sky in a diamond chariot. Dazhbog might have inherited Svarog's

title of the Bright Sun, as well as his symbol, a symmetrical cross within a circle.

Dazhbog's clerics have access to the domains of Good, Law, Protection, and Sun. The role of the priesthood involves their participation in the major religious festivals throughout the year. They serve a god that is the antithesis of darkness, death, and evil, making them ideal adventurers. They are perfect for serving as advisors, judges, and diplomats. Dazhbog is worshiped by many, but farmers pay him particular reverence.

Death Crone

A neutral evil goddess common to many Indo-European cultures, the malicious and predatory Death Crone uses her wiles and sorcery to collect souls. Worshiped by few, most mortals try to avoid her attention. She serves as the patron for necromancers, other evil spellcasters, and outcasts from society. The Crone has sharp teeth and nails, which she uses to rend flesh from bone. She wears black, ragged robes. Her symbols are skulls and ravens.

The Death Crone's clerics have access to the domains of Death, Evil, Magic, and Trickery. If one is present in a community, it is hoped the cleric's presence will keep the Death Crone appeased. They can sometimes be found serving an evil lord, but they are just as likely to keep their own counsel.

Gabija

The neutral good goddess of hearth and home, Gabija protects the family and its animals, and helps preserve the hearth fire. She is popular with commoners, especially women responsible for maintaining and nurturing their families. The flame is her symbol, and her favored weapon is a dagger.

Her clerics have access to the domains of Fire, Good, Healing, and Protection. It is hard to imagine her priests as adventurers, but it is possible. The goddess's priests are mostly concerned about the welfare of the local village. Gabija's cult might have an easier time surviving in places that have converted to Christianity than the cults of some of the more dramatic gods.

Jarilo

Jarilo is the god of physical love and fertility. He appears as a young man riding a white horse, wearing a white cloak, and carrying sheaves of wheat (a fertility symbol). Chaotic neutral in alignment, he is given to indulging his passions, and his influence is seen in any number of rash actions, even if they are not directly related to love or other affairs of the heart. His death is mourned every fall, and his return is celebrated every spring.

Farmers, lovers, warriors, and others who take rash actions or desire fertility pay homage to him. He grants his clerics access to the Chaos, Luck, Plant, and Protection domains.

Jurate

Jurate is the chaotic good Sea Mother of the Baltic Sea. Balt sailors and fishermen revere the goddess, and seafaring Slavs, Finns, and Scandinavians pray for her blessing.

She appears as a beautiful mermaid and lives in an amber palace at the bottom of the sea. The amber deposits found along the Baltic coast are said to be her tears, shed for the loss of a mortal lover exiled or killed by Perun for breaking the boundary between the mortal and immortal. She depends on her enchantments to defend herself, but if a weapon is needed, she chooses a dagger. A perfectly shaped piece of amber is her symbol.

Jurate's clerics have access to the domains of Healing, Luck, Travel, and Water. They are most prevalent in coastal communities, obviously. These priests are suited for adventures on the sea, and they are always welcome aboard a ship.

Lunt-Ater

A neutral good sun god of the Eurasian steppes, the Gander Chief is also known as the World Surveyor Man, because he learns the secrets of the earth as he travels across the sky on his daily journey. He is a powerful shaman and uses his magical powers to aid mankind against such threats as plagues and famine. As his name implies, he often takes the form of a gander (which is one of his symbols), but his normal form is that of a man dressed as a tribal shaman carrying a staff.

The Gander Chief's clerics have access to the domains of Healing, Knowledge, Magic, and Sun. They normally function as one of the tribe's shamans, presiding over religious ceremonies and providing

Dark Ages Eastern European Gods

Deity	Alignment	Domains	Favored Weapon
Dazhbog the Bright One	LG	Good, Law, Protection, Sun	Longsword
Death Crone	NE	Death, Evil, Magic, Trickery	Quarterstaff
Gabija, Goddess of the Hearth	NG	Fire, Good, Healing, Protection	Dagger
Jarilo, God of Fertility	CN	Chaos, Luck, Plant, Protection	Shortspear
Jurate, Goddess of the Sea	CG	Healing, Luck, Travel, Water	Dagger
Lunt-Ater the Gander Chief	NG	Healing, Knowledge, Magic, Sun	Quarterstaff
Meness, God of the Moon	N	Luck, Travel, Trickery, War	Longsword
Mokosh, Mother Moist Earth	LG	Animal, Earth, Healing, Plant	Sickle
Perun the Thunderer	LN	Air, Law, Strength, Thunder*	Throwing axe
Rod, God of Harvests	LN	Healing, Knowledge, Plant, Protection	Quarterstaff
Saule, Mother Sun	NG	Divination, Good, Healing, Sun	Shortsword
Stribog, Master of Winds	LE	Air, Destruction, Evil, Winter*	Shortspear
Svantovit, God of Prosperity	N	Divination, Luck, Plant, War	Greatsword
Svarog, Lord of Heaven	LG	Fire, Good, Healing, Law, Sun	Longspear
Svarozic, God of Fire	NG	Animal, Fire, Good, Healing	Longsword
Ukko, God of the Sky	LG	Air, Good, Healing, Law, Water	Longsword
Volos, God of Cattle	N	Animal, Luck, Plant, Travel	Quarterstaff

*See the New Domains sidebar.

divinations and healing for the clan. Outside of the confines of the nomad tents and wagons, these clerics play a supporting role in military matters. They are quite useful in diplomatic missions.

Meness

Meness is the neutral moon god of the Baltic tribes. He protects those who travel at night and serves as a patron to warriors and rogues. He appears as a young, regal-looking man wearing a crown and a cloak decorated with stars. He wields a diamond sword and rides across the sky in a chariot pulled by a gray horse. Meness is married to Saule, and their children are the stars. He is a rival of Perun, who struck his face with a lightning bolt as punishment for lusting after another goddess. Evidence of this conflict is seen during the monthly phases of the moon. A moon and stars are commonly painted on the shields of Baltic warriors.

Meness's clerics have access to the domains of Luck, Travel, Trickery, and War. Socially, they are almost as important as Saule's clerics, although in matters of hunting and war they are superior. Although most worshippers revere both Meness and Perun, the moon god's clerics harbor some resentment against the Thunderer's priests. Fights between the faiths are uncommon, but Meness's clerics try to outdo Perun's whenever the two groups have mutual interests in public affairs.

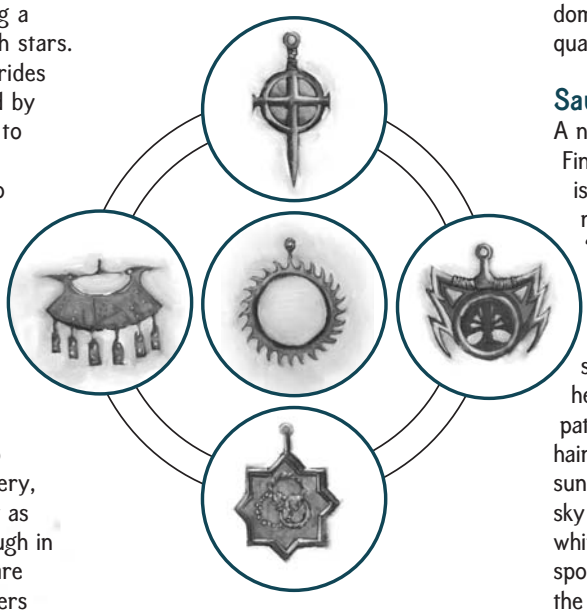
Mokosh

Moist Mother Earth governs fertility, home, and healing. Her favor is sought for good harvests and healthy herd animals by the community as a whole, and by women in particular in regards to childbirth and rearing. Mokosh might have Finnish or Iranian origins, and Moist Mother Earth is a title that might have applied to other, similar deities before Mokosh became preeminent. The cult was most active in Russia.

She offers her clerics the choice of domains from Animal, Earth, Healing, and Plant. Her favored weapon is the sickle.

Perun

The most universal god of the Slavs, the Thunderer is worshiped throughout Eastern Europe. He is the Slavic manifestation of the numerous Indo-European thunder gods and closely resembles Thor of Norse mythology. All Slavs seek his blessing, for without his rains the crops wither away. Warriors also revere him for his strength and power, although he is not a war god. Like Thor and other storm gods, Perun is the enemy of the World Serpent (Zmiya, in Slavic mythology) and evildoers. Perun is a creator and an enforcer; he gives life like other creator



gods, but he also dispenses harsh justice to mortals and immortals alike.

Perun appears as a middle-aged man, and his wild hair and beard are a fiery copper or wiry black. His emotions sway between brooding and fearsome anger. He flies across the skies in his chariot, pulled by goats. Perun creates thunderbolts when he throws his axe, his favored weapon. His symbol is a six-spoke wheel, which represents his thunder chariot. Oak trees are sacred to the cult and the god's totem animal is the bull (it is sometimes said that a pair of bulls, instead of goats, pull his chariot).

Perun's clerics have access to the domains of Air, Law, Thunder (see the New Domains sidebar), and Strength. The priesthood serve as leaders in their community, offering judgments in any kind of dispute. The Thunderer's clerics should do well for themselves in pagan Kiev, as Perun was Vladimir's favorite god. Perun's clerics have a special dislike for oath breakers. Priests of Perun are excellent candidates for the adventuring life, and it is not uncommon to find them on military expeditions.

Rod

Rod is a lawful neutral deity of fertility of the Eastern Slavs, and he serves as the protector of the family. The rozhanitsy, minor deities of birth and fate similar to the norns of Scandinavian mythology, serve him. A festival dedicated to them was celebrated in September after the harvests were gathered.

Rod's clerics have access to the Healing, Knowledge, Plant, and Protection domains. His favored weapon is the quarterstaff.

Saule

A neutral good sun goddess of the Balts, Finns, and some Eurasian nomads, Saule is also known as Saules Mate, and her names translate into "Sun" and "Mother Sun." As a sun goddess, she is responsible for nurturing life, but her portfolio also includes childbirths, weaving, and music. She has universal appeal to the cultures that revere her, with bards especially seeking her patronage. Saule is depicted as golden-haired, dressed in golden robes, pouring sunlight out of a jug. She rides across the sky in a golden chariot drawn by two white horses. Her symbol is an eight-spoked wheel, representing the rays of the sun and the wheels of her chariot. Her favored weapon is a shining short-sword. She is married to Meness, the Baltic moon god.

Clerics of Saule have access to the domains of Divination, Good, Healing, and Sun. The cult is an essential part of any community, and its priests serve as leaders, healers, and protectors. Saule's clerics might also extend their influence beyond a local village, providing their services to a larger region, especially the more martial priests.

Stribog

Stribog is the lawful evil god of winter, known as the Master of Winds and the Scatterer of Wealth. Those who worship this malevolent god seek to appease his frigid wrath and to ritually observe his dominion over their lives. Stribog appears as an old man. Cold winds constantly ruffle his cloak and white hair. His favored weapon is the spear.

Stribog's clerics have access to the domains of Air, Destruction, Evil, and Winter (see the New Domains sidebar). The small priesthood dedicated to Stribog seek to gain power for themselves and to exert harsh influence over

their communities, mirroring winter's brutal subjugation of life during its season. Stribog is another one of the select patron gods of Vladimir's Kiev, joining Perun, Dazhbog, and Mokosh. His clerics should benefit from this prestigious position within the Kiev community. Stribog's priesthood is busiest with their duties in winter; the rest of the year Stribog's clerics might engage in any kind of venture.

Svantovit

The god of war and bounty, Christian writers reported that he ruled over the other Slavic gods, although this might be due to the particular influence his cult had in the few surviving pagan strongholds in the Baltic during the twelfth century. The Baltic Slavs might have considered Svantovit more important than the other gods because they were often at war with their Christian German and Slavic neighbors.

Svantovit is the neutral god of prosperity for the Baltic Slavs. He is responsible for good fortune with both harvests and military ventures, as both are very important sources of a tribe's wealth and survival. The worship of Svantovit draws the veneration and offerings of pagan Scandinavians (primarily Danes) seeking the god's blessing in trade and war (see the Temple at Rugen sidebar). Svantovit rides a white horse and uses a longsword in battle. His symbol is a cup and a greatsword.

The clerics of Svantovit have access to the domains of Divination, Luck, Plant, and War. As the pagan Baltic tribes find themselves under increasing pressure from their Christian neighbors, the war god's priests seek to bolster the morale of a people at the edge of defeat and to encourage resistance from those who are already under military and religious domination. Svantovit's clerics also encourage war as a means of obtaining loot and slaves. During more peaceful times, the cult is very active in trading centers.

Svarog

Svarog rules the heavens and gives light and life-giving warmth to the earth. He is known for his ability to assume many forms, preferring to appear as a falcon, wolf, horse, or whirlwind. Several lesser deities are credited as being Svarog's sons, such as Svarozic, the god of earthly fire, and Stribog, the god of winter. These deities could also be considered personifications of Svarog's many aspects, and this interpretation has been used in determining his clerics' domain selections: Fire, Good, Healing, Law, and Sun. The longspear is his favored weapon.

Svarozic

Svarozic rules earthly fire. Like Dazhbog, he is either considered to be one of Svarog's sons, or the manifestation of one of his aspects, in this case, the celestial fire brought to earth. He occupies a role similar to Gabija the hearth goddess. Besides the obvious need for fire for warmth and cooking, fire is also associated with healing, and people and animals ritually pass between bonfires to ward away or cure diseases. Svarozic's favored weapon is a longsword, and his symbol is a flame.

Svarozic's clerics have access to the domains of Animal, Fire, Good, and Healing. His priesthood is very popular with common people, and his influence is a part of everyday life. The fire god's clerics do little outside of the community out of their own initiative, but as they usually ally with the cults of some of the most prominent deities, they assist those cults as needed.

Ukko

Ukko is the lawful good sky god of the Finns. A creator god, Ukko rules as the supreme deity of the Finnish pantheon. He is worshiped for providing good weather first and foremost, but he is invoked for most of life's needs, since he is so powerful and good. The sky god appears as an old man, and he uses magic and a flaming sword against the forces of evil. The flaming sword serves as one of his symbols.

Ukko's clerics have access to the domains of Air, Good, Healing, Law, and Water. The cult's priests serve in a variety of ways, just like Ukko himself. They are providers and protectors of their communities.

The cults of Perun and Dazhbog overshadow Ukko's cult by the seventh century, so clerics dedicated to him are rare by the Viking Age. The Eurasian nomads also have similar sky gods, and it is easiest to refer to each of them as Sky Father.

Volos

Volos is the neutral god of horned animals, crops, and wealth. Although subordinate to Svarog and Perun in overall power, Volos is very popular in his specific role as the protector of horned beasts. As the East Slavs began to develop trading settlements, his influence expanded to the protection of merchants and tradesmen, possibly because many of them relied on animals for transport. His worship was very active in Novgorod and Rostov, although his cult ranged throughout Eastern Europe.

Although the well-being of the community's herd animals is of great importance to everyone, merchants and craftsmen especially seek the god's favor. He appears as a shepherd, and his favored weapon is a quarterstaff. Symbols associated with the cult are sheaves of grain, cattle, and oxen.

Clerics of Volos have access to the domains of Animal, Luck, Plant, and Travel. The priesthood serves the community by ensuring the health of its herd animals and by blessing its marketplace. Volos's clerics are sought as arbitrators in trade disputes and it is wise to have one accompany any trading venture, especially the long and dangerous journey to Constantinople.

New Domains

THUNDER DOMAIN
Deities: Perun
Granted Power:
You gain sonic resistance 5.
1 *Shatter*
2 *Soundburst*
3 *Call lightning*
4 *Lightning bolt*
5 *Shout*
6 *Chain lightning*
7 *Control weather*
8 *Power word, stun*
9 *Storm of vengeance*

WINTER DOMAIN
Deities: Stribog
Granted Power:
You gain cold resistance 5.
1 *Ray of frost*
2 *Chill metal*
3 *Protection from elements*
4 *Sleet Storm*
5 *Ice Storm*
6 *Cone of cold*
7 *Otiluke's freezing sphere*
8 *Simulacrum*
9 *Elemental swarm (air elementals only)*

RED SAILS
Fell and Forlorn Bestiary: Monsters of Eastern Europe

by Paul Leach • illustrated by Richard Sardhina

Slavic folklore has several legendary creatures to offer the Red Sails campaign setting, ranging from the familiar vampires, werewolves, witches, and dragons to the less known fey spirits such as leshii, vila, rusalkas, and vodyanoi.

Before you use these creatures in your campaign, consider their mystique. Even the most friendly fey evokes fear from folk in a historical setting. The appearance of legendary creatures makes for a moment of great significance, and they are rarely encountered often or in great numbers. The DM should ensure they are presented as something more than interesting and challenging encounters.

The Natural World

The Animals and Monsters sidebar shows the most commonly encountered animals in Eastern Europe and the Baltic Sea. In addition to this list, the DM might "fudge" things and drop in a dire animal or two; even a giant owl or eagle might be good. The smallest vermin, such as tiny spiders and centipedes, are not out of place either. Natural animals from outside of Eastern Europe can also be encountered, especially on the trading roads between Europe, Arabia, and the Orient (Constantinople in the Mediterranean and Itil in the Caspian). Camels were a common feature of merchant caravans of Arabia and the Near East, and wealthy markets could attract captive exotic animals.

The Spirit World

The people of the Dark Ages considered any being or creature that was not a normal man or animal as something that was of the Spirit World (also called the Other World); if those beings did not originate from the Spirit World, they at least had a supernatural connection to it. This concept encompasses a wide variety of subjects, including shamans, vampires, and even dragons.

Existing Monsters

Dragons

The dragons of Slavic lore should be familiar to D&D players. They often breathe lightning or fire, although no particular scale color is associated with the dragon's breath weapon ability. The dragons usually have one of two body types: the standard D&D version or the wyrm. The wyrm body type is similar to the standard body type, but it lacks limbs and wings (this is the common dragon body of Scandinavian and Germanic legend). Dragons sometimes have multiple heads, with 3, 6, and 9 being the most common (hydras are a good substitution). Most of them are intelligent and evil, using their magic powers and spells to acquire treasure. Some dragons have the ability to change their forms, often taking human shapes and courting human lovers. It should be noted that some Slavic sorcerers supposedly gained their powers by the dragon's blood in their veins, just as the D&D sorcerer class description suggests.

Giants

Hill giants can be used as presented in the *Monster Manual,* but some DMs might find it worthwhile to make some modifications. Their dress would not necessarily be as barbaric, and more often than not, these creatures would be found singly or in small families. The DM should feel free to add a little Intelligence or Charisma to these creatures and create some unique wizards and sorcerers.

Giants might not always be evil, but they usually are. Normally found in wilderness areas, they keep their distance from most humans. Although they might prey on unwary travelers, these monsters do not make habits of raiding human settlements. The DM should think of interesting ways for these monsters to interact with the characters. Giants who are adept at magic should be as dangerous and three dimensional as any other NPC spellcaster.

Hags

Witches are a mainstay of many cultures' folk legends, and this is especially true of Russia. D&D hags seem to be based closely on the archetypical witch of Russian lore: Baba Yaga, a monstrous crone with great magical powers and a taste for malicious schemes and human flesh. The origin of Baba Yaga (who does not necessarily represent just one witch) is likely to be the Death Crone, a common figure in most pagan mythologies. Baba Yaga's home is surrounded with symbols of death, such as skull-lined fences, giving further credence to the theory. It should be noted that characters encountering a hag would not simply think of her as a monstrous humanoid, but as something far greater, at least in terms of how she

fits into their view of this world and the Other World.

Hags use their magic powers to cause bad weather and spread illness among cattle. As they most often live in the woods, it is believed they are one of the causes of missing children and travelers. Sometimes, although not often, a hag might prove helpful to a group of characters. It would be wise for them to parley carefully and question the hag's motives.

Vampires
The D&D vampire offers the best playability versus strict interpretations of the numerous myths and descriptions of this monster's nature and power. Some vampires of East European myth are not necessarily undead, but they do have the ability to send their souls from their bodies in the form of some flying creature, such as a butterfly or a bat. In this form they attempt to steal the souls of others. Other vampires are undead who have returned after not being buried or cremated properly.

Werewolves
In East European legend, werewolves tend to be born, not made. When a child is born with a tooth or a strange birthmark, it is an indication that it will have the power to change into a wolf. If the infant's tooth is removed, he might lose the power. The ability to change into a wolf is closely related to pagan shamanism, as some of its divinations require the shaman's soul to take the form of other creatures (figuratively, if not literally). Any werewolves in the campaign might also be clerics (see the "Bright Sun, Mother Earth" article for more information on pagan Slavic and Eurasian priests). Lycanthropy as a transmittable disease might not exist.

The Fey and the Undead
The fey and the undead constitute most of the fantasy monsters in this setting. The Animals and Monsters sidebar lists undead that aren't expressly Slavic or Eurasian in origin, but can be used without compromising the cultural context of the campaign. Fey creatures are presented fully under the New and Variant Monsters section.

New and Variant Monsters

Other creatures inhabit the woods, streams, and even homes of the ancient Slavs. Some are benign, while others are deadly. Most of them are considered dangerous to confront, regardless of their feelings toward mankind.

Domovoi (Ghost)

A domovoi is an ancestral spirit who resides in the homes of the East Slavs. The domovoi is rarely seen, and its interaction with its family is usually limited to performing small chores for them while they sleep. Those who have seen a domovoi usually describe it as a dwarf-like old man, covered from head to toe in fur. Its eyes and nose are the only features to peak through its shaggy coat.

The creature is not the spirit of any particular ancestor, but a composite representing the family as a whole. It keeps watch over the living family, and they pay respect to it by leaving it small tidbits of food and bowls of milk. Belief in the domovoi is a remnant of ancestor worship rituals the early migratory Slavs shared with the Eurasian cultures of the steppes.

A domovoi might get into mischief occasionally, such as hiding things or making noises, but rarely will one cause havoc for its family. Playing tricks on a domovoi or otherwise hampering the spirit's efforts to complete its nocturnal tasks will earn its hosts some grief. It is considered bad luck to make one angry enough to leave the home.

A domovoi should be treated as a ghost, using a standard forest gnome as the base creature. The domovoi's special attacks are limited to manifestation and telekinesis.

Animals and Monsters

Animals	Monsters
Badger	Ghost
Bat	Ghoul
Bear	Giant, hill
Bison	Hag, annis
Boar	Hag, green
Donkey	Hydra
Eagle	Lich
Hawk	Ogre
Horse	Shadow
Mule	Skeleton
Owl	Spectre
Pony	Vampire
Rat	Werewolf
Raven	Wight
Shark	Wraith
Squid	Zombie
Whale	
Wolf	
Wolverine	

Leshii

Medium-Size Fey
Hit Dice: 6d6+12 (33 hp)
Initiative: +1 (Dex)
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural)
Attacks: Gore +5 melee, club +0 melee
Damage: Gore 1d6+2, club 1d6+2
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities
Special Qualities: Animal form
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +5
Abilities: Str 15, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 15
Skills: Animal Empathy +8, Bluff +6, Hide +10, Intimidate +7, Listen +6, Move Silently +10, Spot +6, Wilderness Lore +12
Feats: Alertness, Great Fortitude, Track
Climate/Terrain: Temperate and cold forest
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic neutral
Advancement Range: 7-12 HD (Medium-size)

A leshii is a dangerous forest spirit that resembles a large, brawny satyr. Its body is covered with shaggy fur, and its hair and beard are wild and tangled. This monster is known for its trickery, and even if it makes overtures to help a mortal, great caution should be exercised.

Leshii are protectors of the forest and the personification of nature's wild unpredictability. Huntsmen and others who make their living in or near the forest are careful to leave the local leshii a gift of little cakes, lest it become offended. Nothing guarantees protection from a leshii, although careless destruction of trees and over-hunting game brings offenders to its attention. A leshii often discreetly watches forest trespassers; this is quite easy considering its natural stealth and magical abilities to become invisible or take the form of wild animals. The leshii prefers to use its spell-like abilities and frightening appearance (either natural or the form of a dangerous forest predator) to ensure its victims get lost and perish.

Leshii are also known for striking bargains with mortals, performing some small service in return for the cakes mentioned above. Nothing should be taken for granted when dealing with one of these creatures, as a leshii will kidnap, steal, or otherwise manipulate people or situations to fulfill its part of an agreement. For instance, a leshii might agree to watch over one's sheep, but it might persuade (by magic or intimidation) some poor, old peasant woman to do its work for him.

Despite these traits, leshii are not dedicated to hunting and killing mortals who enter the forests; nor are they expressly evil. Just like nature itself, they are there to remind us that the weak, unwary, and foolish are apt to fall victim to the dangers of the wilderness.

Combat

Leshii do not engage in melee combat very often, preferring to harass their victims with their magic abilities. They can be provoked to killing, though, and they might take the form of a forest predator to slay mortals. When they fight in their natural form, they gore with their horns and follow up with club attacks.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*charm person, confusion, invisibility,* and *suggestion.* These abilities are as the spells cast by a 12th-level sorcerer (save DC 12 + spell level).

Animal Form (Su): Once per day a leshii can transform itself into an animal as the *polymorph self* spell cast by a 12th-level sorcerer. A leshii's favorite animal forms are those of a wolf or bear.

Skills: Leshii receive a +4 racial bonus to Move Silently and Wilderness Lore skill checks.

Rusalka

Medium-Size Fey (Aquatic)
Hit Dice: 2d6 (7 hp)
Initiative: +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed: 30 ft., swim 30 ft.
AC: 16 (+4 Dex, +2 natural)
Attacks: Dagger +1 melee
Damage: Dagger 1d4
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Beguiling song
Special Qualities: *Water breathing,* water symbiosis
Saves: Fort +0, Ref +9, Will +5
Abilities: Str 10, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 18
Skills: Escape Artist +10*, Hide +10*, Listen +8, Move Silently +10, Perform (ballad, chant, epic, melody, ode, storytelling) +10, Spot +8
Feats: Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes

Climate/Terrain: Temperate and cold aquatic
Organization: Solitary or covey (3-6)
Challenge Rating: 1
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic neutral
Advancement Range: 3-6 HD (Medium-size)

Rusalkas are female spirits who dwell in the lakes, rivers, and streams of Russia. Their beguiling song is known to lure men to their watery graves. The beautiful rusalkas have pale skin and golden or green hair. Their clothing is usually nothing more than a gown or shawl, and some rusalka go bare skinned.

The rusalkas are believed to be the restless spirits of drowned maidens, tied to the place of their deaths. The rusalka is a good example of how the Slavs believed the gods, undead, and lesser spirits of places were closely bound.

Most of the time, just one rusalka inhabits a body of water, but sometimes a small covey lives in an area. The rusalkas lead lonely lives, but some tales indicate that vodyanoi take rusalka wives. To ease their loneliness, these fey often use their song to entice men to join them. Some evil or neutral rusalkas are content to let their victims drown, while good rusalkas might confer *water breathing* upon enamored mortals. Relationships between willing mortals and rusalkas are doomed to end in sadness. The rusalka either frees its paramour (or forces him to leave by refusing to give him the ability to breathe water) when it realizes he is not truly content to live in its world beneath the water's surface.

Combat

A rusalka does not look for martial conflict, only lovers or victims. If threatened, it will often flee, using its natural hiding skills and knowledge of waterways to evade pursuers.

Beguiling Song (Su): A rusalka can attempt to beguile creatures with its song. The rusalka sings, targeting a single creature it can see within 300 yards of the body of water to which it is linked (see water symbiosis). This is a sonic, mind-influencing effect, and the creature must be able to hear the rusalka for it to take effect. The targeted creature must make a Will saving throw (DC 17). If the save is successful, that creature cannot be affected by that rusalka's song for one day.

Failure indicates the creature is utterly beguiled and moves toward the rusalka, taking the most direct route available. If that path leads into a dangerous area (such as very deep or fast-moving water) the beguiled creature gets a second saving throw. A rusalka who desires a companion often moves out of the water and bestows *water breathing* upon its beguiled victim so it can take him underwater. A beguiled creature takes no actions other than to defend himself. (Thus, a fighter cannot run away or attack, but suffers no defensive penalties.) A beguiled victim that moves within 5 feet of the rusalka must make a Will saving throw (DC 18) or be *charmed* as per *charm monster* cast by an 8th-level sorcerer. Success means that the character is freed of the beguilement and is immune to that rusalka's beguiling song for one day. The beguiling effect continues so long as the rusalka sings. The rusalka does not need to continue to sing to keep a victim *charmed.*

A rusalka can use its beguiling song both above and below the water. Good rusalkas cast *water breathing* on their *charmed* companions several times a day to keep them alive below the waves. Evil rusalkas move into deep water, forcing a beguiled victim to move toward them but never allowing them to get within 5 feet. If these unlucky creatures fail their second saving throw, they usually drown (see The Drowning Rule in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Water Breathing (Sp): Four times a day, a rusalka can cast *water breathing* as a 12th-level sorcerer.

Water Symbiosis (Su): Each rusalka is mystically bound to a body of water or a waterway as small as a pond or as large as a lake or river. Although aquatic, a rusalka can move as far as 300 yards from the body of water to which it is bound and breathe normally. If the rusalka strays farther than that, it must hold its breath or immediately start to drown (see The Drowning Rule in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Once a rusalka has moved beyond the boundary of its connection, it cannot breathe normally until it has immersed itself in its body of water.

Skills: *A rusalka gains a +4 circumstance bonus to Escape Artist and Hide skill checks when in contact with the body of water in which it lives.

Vila

Medium-Size Fey
Hit Dice: 4d6+4 (18 hp)
Initiative: +3 (Dex)
Speed: 40 ft.
AC: 13 (+3 Dex)
Attacks: Shortbow +6 ranged; or longsword +2 melee
Damage: Shortbow 1d6; or longsword 1d8
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft
Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities
Special Qualities: SR 15, polymorph self

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +4
Abilities: Str 11, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 16
Skills: Craft (bowmaking) +7, Escape Artist +7, Hide +14, Listen +7, Move Silently +14, Spot +7, Perform (dance, pipes) +5
Feats: Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (shortbow)

Climate/Terrain: Temperate and cold forest
Organization: Solitary or band (2-5)
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic good
Advancement Range: By character class

The vila are fey battle maidens who discreetly favor heroic warriors with their magical abilities, much like the valkyries of Norse mythology. They are most often found in mountainous areas of the wilderness. When not attending a battle, it might be found enjoying a dancing revel with its sisters in an isolated grove.

These beautiful warrior women wear little battle gear, garbing themselves in nothing more than a gown and cloak, but they are always armed with a bow and sword. They are often encountered alone, but a mighty hero or an epic battle might attract a small band. Although they will sometimes come to the aid of brave fighters, they are not always characterized as benevolent creatures. Chance meetings with one or more vila can be quite dangerous if they are angered unintentionally. This most often happens when someone disturbs one of their dances.

The vila have divine origins and can be linked to Svarog the Bright Sun. They can take the forms of animals he is associated with: falcon, wolf, and horse. As Svarog was arguably the supreme Slavic god, it would not be too presumptuous to think of the vila as his servants or creations, much like Odin's valkyries. The vila also lived in mountain homes, the places on earth that touch the sky. Some legends associate stormy winds with the vila; weather and winds both fell under Svarog's influence.

As previously mentioned, vila are drawn to the bravest mortal warriors. Their aid is often subtle: they can cause a warrior's enemies to hesitate or stumble, or they might deflect the enemy's attacks. Vila are not above offering more direct assistance, such as slaying an enemy or two with arrows fired from their deadly bows. After a battle, vila might bind the wounds of a surviving hero or ease the suffering of the mortally wounded.

A vila rarely meddles in mortal affairs outside the realm of combat. Some vila do become enamored with a chosen hero, going so far as to bear his children, who become heroes in their own right. It should be noted that a settled life does not suit these fey warriors. A lover or husband and family can never replace the vila's desire for battle and revelry with its sisters.

Combat
A vila is not likely to be surprised (or even seen) if encountered alone, due to its ability to conceal itself and change into animal forms. If one lends its aid to a mortal warrior, the warrior might not even be aware of it. A vila often makes itself known by firing volleys of arrows at those who make it angry.

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day—*bane, bless, hold person, invisibility,* and *wind wall.* These abilities are as the spells cast by an 8th-level sorcerer (save DC 13 + spell level).

Polymorph Self (Su): A vila can take one of three animal forms up to three times a day: falcon, horse, or wolf. This ability is as per the *polymorph self* spell cast by an 8th-level sorcerer.

Skills: All vila gain a +4 racial bonus to Hide and Move Silently skill checks.

Vila Characters
A vila's favored class is fighter.

Vodyanoi

Medium-Size Fey (Aquatic)
Hit Dice: 5d6+5 (22 hp)
Initiative: +3 (Dex)
Speed: 30 ft., swim 60 ft.
AC: 17 (+3 Dex, +4 natural)
Attacks: 2 claws +6 melee
Damage: claw 1d4+1
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft
Special Attacks: Improved grab, *control water, fish cloud*
Special Qualities: SR 16
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +6
Abilities: Str 13, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 11

Skills: Bluff +8, Hide +11*, Listen +10, Move Silently +11*, Spot +10, Wilderness Lore +4
Feats: Weapon Finesse (claw), Weapon Focus (claw)

Climate/Terrain: Temperate and cold aquatic
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always chaotic neutral
Advancement Range: 7-10 HD (Medium-size)

Vodyanoi

Vodanoi are moody fey who dwell in the rivers and lakes of Russia. Their powers allow them considerable control over their environment; they can alter a river's water level drastically and ensure that schools of fish are plentiful or scarce. Vodyanoi act as providers and destroyers to those who live by their domains.

Although rarely seen, vodyanoi appear as old men with potbellies and beards. Their hair is a messy tangle of green and yellow reeds. Their aged appearance belies their strength and agility, and their long nails are vicious claws. Vodyanoi can breathe air just as easily as water, but they do not often leave the comfort of their homes.

Villagers who live near a river or lake are careful to make sacrifices of fish or cattle to the local vodyanoi. Anyone whose trade depends on water makes offerings as well, from fishermen to millers who use the river to power a waterwheel. Vodyanoi who have been placated are more likely to provide schools of fish and keep the river from leaving its bed. They are known for their unpredictable natures, so regular sacrifices are no guarantee of their favor. On the other hand, a vodyanoi who is shown disrespect will probably retaliate by drowning a villager or fisherman. The angered fey might also pursue harsher actions, perhaps flooding an entire village or sweeping away bridges.

On rare occasions, a vodyanoi might attempt to trade with isolated locals (it will not stroll into the village market). It might offer fish or some other treasure found in the river in exchange for a cow. Although it might seem obvious, Russian folktales advised listeners that one could tell if a strange trader was a vodyanoi if water puddled around its feet.

Previous editions of the D&D game have referred to aquatic umber hulks as vodyanoi. That creature should not be confused with the monster presented in this article.

Combat

Vodyanoi are wily fey, ready to ambush anyone who is already in the water or even at the water's edge. Sometimes a vodyanoi will use its power to sweep victims into a river by causing a sudden flood.

Control Water (Sp): A vodyanoi can cast *control water* three times a day as a 10th-level sorcerer.

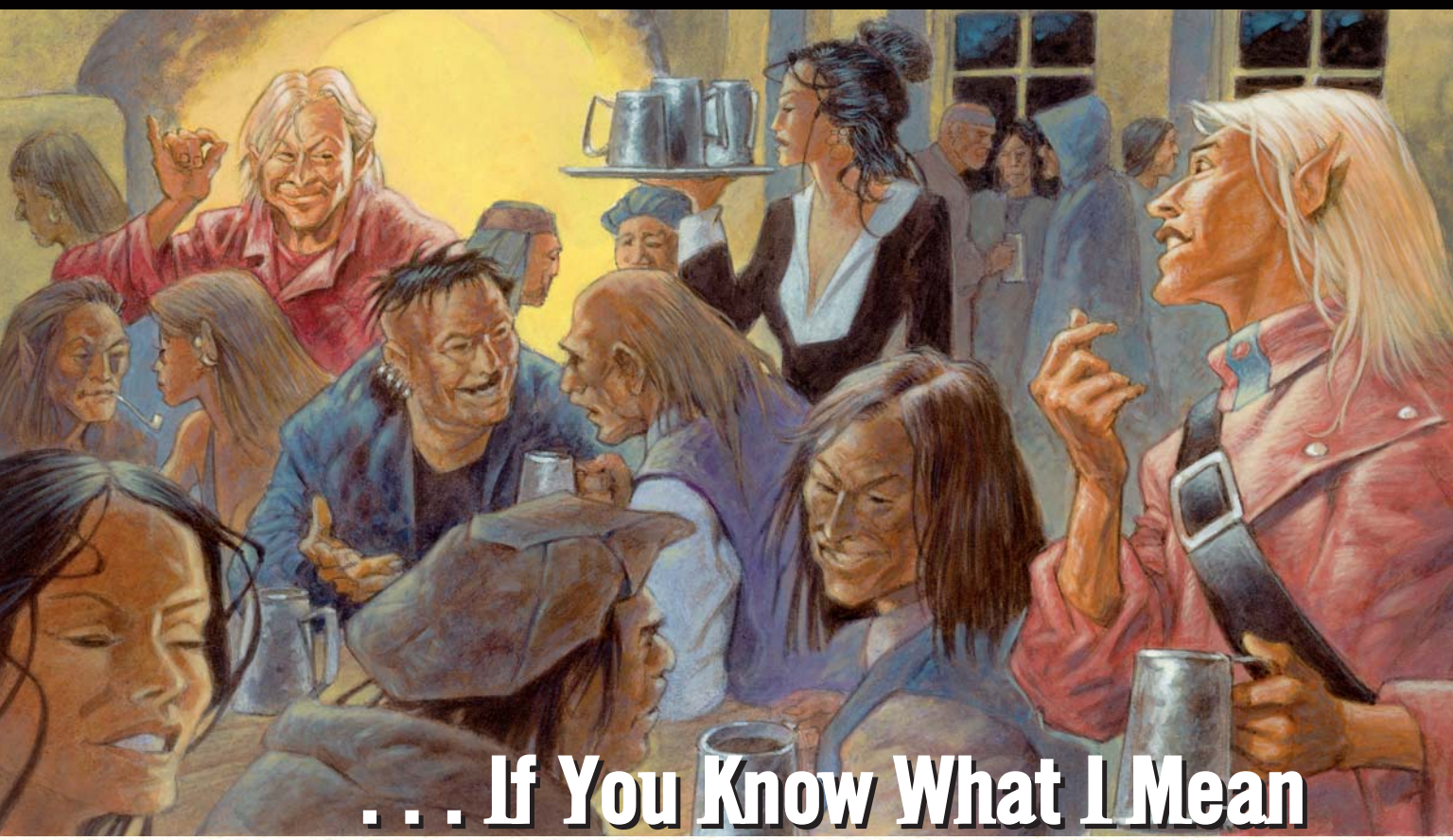
Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the vodyanoi must hit a single foe with both claw attacks. If it gets a hold, the vodyanoi often attempts to pin a foe and hold him underwater until he drowns, dealing damage with both claws each round.

Fish Cloud (Sp): When submerged in water, a vodyanoi can summon a huge school of magic fish to provide concealment (similar to the *fog cloud* spell). This school of fish swims around the point the vodyanoi designates in a 20-foot radius. This cloud of fish obscures all sight, including darkvision, beyond 5 feet. A creature within 5 feet has half concealment (attacks suffer a 20% miss chance). Creatures farther away have total concealment (50% miss chance, and the attacker can't use sight to locate the target). A strong current disperses the cloud of fish in 4 rounds. A very strong current disperses the fish in 1 round. The fish created by this spell are formed of magic, they are not real animals; objects and energies pass through them as though they were not there.

A vodyanoi can summon a *fish cloud* three times a day. The *fish cloud* remains for 40 minutes or until dispersed or dispelled (dispel check, DC 15).

Vodyanoi sometimes use this ability to deceive villagers, making them think the Vodyanoi have brought fish to their waters. When vodyanoi really want to reward people with fish, they use their Wilderness Lore skill to lure fish into an area.

Skills: *Vodyanoi gain a +8 circumstance bonus to Hide and Move Silently skill checks when in contact with a body of water.



. . . If You Know What I Mean

Getting the Most Out of Your Secret Social Skills

by Robin D. Laws • illustrated by Val Mayerik

Some players might be surprised at first to see that their D&D characters can gain a skill called Innuendo or Sense Motive. These days we most often associate the word "innuendo" with jokes that manage to be naughty without actually using coarse language. "Sense Motive" seems odd too. When you're in the dungeon and the orcs attack you, it's pretty obvious what they want.

In this case, "innuendo" refers to any statement that carries implications only an informed listener will fully understand. If you boast a high rank in Innuendo, you have become adept at piecing together the hidden meanings in the statements of others. You substitute your general experience of the way people indicate things without really saying them for the specific knowledge that would make you a truly informed listener. As explained in the skill description (*Player's Handbook,* pg. 70), it's still best to have that specific knowledge. When figuring out the hidden meanings of an overheard conversation, you suffer a -2 penalty for each crucial fact you lack. Even so, given a high enough roll, it's possible to put the pieces together without the first clue as to the speakers' plans.

Despite its rather specific name, the Sense Motive skill covers a broad range of abilities. Using this skill, you can determine when someone is lying to you or simply not telling the whole truth, you can sense if your companions or NPCs have been charmed or otherwise enchanted, you can tell if someone is trustworthy or not, and you can figure out how another creature feels about you or something else.

I CANT UNDERSTAND YOU

NPCs who want to hide their true intentions from eavesdroppers often do so by using an esoteric vocabulary known only to insiders. These special ways of talking fall into different categories.

SLANG: Anyone who occasionally speaks in an informal or colloquial manner uses slang. Slang terms give you an alternate, more fun or casual way of saying something conventional. Slang synonyms and figures of speech come into fashion for a generation or so and then fade away. They vary from region to region, even within the same language group. Slang is only useful for masking your meaning when you know that the people around you don't know your slang.

JARGON: A jargon is a set of specialized terms used by a particular profession or vocation. Its main purpose is to allow members of a profession—for example, physicians or barristers—to communicate technical information to one another. Its use in innuendo is a secondary benefit. Professionals can fill their speech with jargon to impress and befuddle the unwashed masses, often in an effort to inflate their fees and make it seem that they're doing more work than they really are.

CANT: A cant, on the other hand, is a vocabulary invented with the express purpose of confusing outsiders. It invariably arises from groups at odds with the authorities, since these are the only people for whom it's worth the effort to create an entire lexicon of deception. The most famous example is Thieves' Cant, used by rogues and criminals to disguise their activities from both their victims and the authorities. Revolutionaries and vagabonds might also use their own forms of cant.

METAPHOR: Even rarer are groups who speak primarily in metaphor. They use poetic language to convey otherwise difficult ideas. Users of exotic systems of metaphor are almost always philosophers, theologians, or mystics. They're trying to describe things which are intangible, like the soul, or reach a level of awareness too sublime to be reduced to common language. They choose visual images, usually from nature, to express their ideas. The use of metaphor is intended not to deceive, but to awaken the listener to a higher reality beyond his limited perceptions.

Tradesmen

"Ar, well, if ye hadn't cross-rotated the flange I might be able to aid ye, but as 'tis it'll be ready in no less than a week, and cost ye twenty-five florins."

CATEGORY: Jargon

NATURE OF GROUP: Tradesmen make and fix things. You'll need to deal with them when buying or repairing pieces of equipment, or when having custom items crafted. They include armorers, smiths, jewelry makers, tailors, cobblers, and carpenters.

Each trade has its own distinctive jargon. Its main purpose is to convey technical information between workers in the same shop.

WHAT THEY'RE HIDING: The jargon also comes in handy when exaggerating the value of the tradesman's work, thereby inflating the fee. The tradesman might be exaggerating the amount of time required, the challenge involved, or the cost of materials. If he has already entered into a standing arrangement to repair things for you, he might be trying to shirk from it by asserting that the damage your item has suffered is irreparable or that the way it was damaged falls outside the scope of your agreement.

SKILL: The tradesman is using the Bluff skill. You oppose his Bluff skill check with a Sense Motive check.

MODIFIERS: These are optional circumstance modifiers that stem from the fact that the tradesman is able to use jargon that you don't understand.

- You are dickering with the establishment's proprietor or most accomplished craftsman, and none of his colleagues are in sight: -4.
- You are dickering with someone as described above, but others are present, and you can look at their faces to determine how far he's stretching it: +2.
- You are dickering with a lone underling less experienced with using jargon: -2.
- You overhear the tradesmen giving jargon-filled but truthful instructions about the item in question: +2.
- If you are skilled in the craft or profession in question, the DM might allow you to make a Craft or Profession skill check (DC 20) to grant you a +2 circumstance bonus to your Sense Motive skill check.

Specific Examples

You can hone your secret social skills by looking at specific examples of groups that use jargon, cant, or metaphor. Those groups are described below, in the following format:

Each example begins with a snippet of sample dialogue. It gives your DM a bit of flavor he can use as a springboard when playing an NPC belonging to this group.

Category: This tells you whether the group uses jargon, cant, or metaphor.

Nature of Group: This entry explains who belongs to the group and what it does.

What They're Hiding: This tells you what they don't want you to know.

Skill: This tells you what skill the NPC is using and how your character can decipher the true meaning.

Modifiers: This lists optional circumstance modifiers to your Innuendo or Sense Motive skill check. Such modifiers are totaled together in circumstances when more than one applies.

Appraisers

"If this were indeed a third century tapestry, sir, it would be worth every haypence you ask. But it is clear from the weaving pattern and the detail on the faces that this is a fifth-century reproduction, and a mildewed one at that."

CATEGORY: Jargon

NATURE OF GROUP: Anyone to whom you try to sell treasure is an appraiser. Each type of item is associated with its own thicket of technical jargon. Types of items include furniture, paintings, tapestries, dishware, silverware, gems, jewelry, books, and magic items.

WHAT THEY'RE HIDING: Appraisers make their profits on the ignorance of both their suppliers, to whom they play down the value of any item, and their customers, to whom they inflate it. Jargon intimidates both into accepting the appraiser's authority.

SKILL: The appraiser is using the Bluff skill. You oppose her Bluff skill check with a Sense Motive check.

MODIFIERS: These are optional circumstance modifiers that stem from the fact that the appraiser is able to use jargon that you don't understand. If you have ranks in the Appraise skill, you've probably already determined what you believe to be the item's value. You can decide not to believe the appraiser if you want, but you'll never know if she's lying unless you make a successful Sense Motive check. After all, maybe there is some detail you forgot or some flaw you could not see.

- You have not researched the nature of the item: -2.
- You have investigated the reputation of the appraiser: +2.
- This appraiser is the area's acknowledged expert in this type of item: -2.
- The appraiser competes with a rival of equal knowledge and resources: +2

Wizards

"The ocularity concerns raised in the fifth volume of Merodian's Concordance pertain here."

CATEGORY: Jargon or cant

NATURE OF GROUP: The extensive book learning of wizards gives them a common background they can draw upon in conversations that would otherwise be dangerous to conduct in public. By referring to specific chapters or page numbers from arcane texts, they can wrap conspiratorial doings in the guise of an impossibly dry academic discussion. For example, in the dialogue snippet above, one wizard is responding with reluctance to another's request that he commence scrying on a target with sophisticated magical defenses.

Although these references double as cant, they're mostly used for actual theoretical discussions. Especially fusty or housebound wizards might not get the hint when a more worldly mage attempts to use wizard's jargon as cant.

WHAT THEY'RE HIDING: Any dangerous or illegal use of magic.

SKILL: The two wizards are using the Innuendo skill. You must make an Innuendo skill check to discover the meaning of the things they say.

MODIFIERS: The DC for your Innuendo skill check is determined by the complexity of the message and influenced by what your PC knows. The message mentioned above is complex (DC 15). A more complicated message, like "I think our foe will detect any scrying attempt," would be DC 20. A simpler one, like "No," would be DC 10.

- You don't know that the wizards are engaged in a conspiracy: -2.
- You don't know the target of their conspiracy: -2.
- If the wizards are using jargon rather than cant, the DM might allow you to make a Knowledge (arcana) skill check

(DC 20) to grant you a +2 circumstance bonus to your Innuendo skill check.

Barristers

"You could take this up with his Majesty, but he will surely rule according to the Aschwazo Precedent of 312, so I suggest you pay my client his counter-claim now. As you'd certainly know if you kept up with such matters, the king's latest deterrent for the filing of frivolous suits is immersion in a cauldron of boiling pitch."

CATEGORY: Jargon or slang

NATURE OF GROUP: In any society with a complicated legal system, there are lawyers. The longer the system has been in place, the more extensive the list of laws, technicalities, and precedents the barrister will be able to muster in her effort to befuddle clients and enemy litigants alike.

WHAT THEY'RE HIDING: If the barrister represents you, she will try to inflate the number of hours she and her assistants must devote to researching your case, so that she can then gouge you on the fee. If she represents someone threatening to sue you, she'll exaggerate the chances of your being defeated in court, so as to extort the highest possible settlement from you. Barristers are too cagey to be caught openly talking business in public. There they use a form of Innuendo to relate their desires to one another. In private they adopt an overstated frankness, laying out their demands in plain, even coarse language. Such language is likely to borrow heavily from the slang of the underworld characters they often deal with.

SKILL: It depends on to whom and where the barrister is conversing. If she's talking to you, she'll be using the Bluff skill, and you need to oppose that with Sense Motive skill checks. If they are talking to one another, barristers often use jargon in public and slang in private, in both cases you might need to make an Innuendo skill check to get the gist of what they are saying to each other.

MODIFIERS: These are optional circumstance modifiers that stem from the fact that the barrister is able to use jargon or slang that you don't understand.

- You are unfamiliar with the jurisdiction's legal system: -4.
- You have researched the barrister's reputation: +2 (applies only to Sense Motive skill checks).
- You can recount the outcome of a recent case litigated by the barrister: +2 (applies only to Sense Motive skill checks).
- You are a well-known, high-status member of the community and a possible repeat customer: +2 (applies only to Sense Motive skill checks).
- You are familiar with some of the local underworld slang: +2 (applies only to Innuendo skill checks).
- If you have ranks in Profession (barrister) or Knowledge (local), the DM might allow you to make a Profession (barrister) or Knowledge (local) skill check (DC 20) to grant you a +2 circumstance bonus to your Sense Motive or Innuendo skill check.

Criminals

"He shanked me upping his walnut, so I gave him a little of the old hurricane, and he came back on the boat."

CATEGORY: Cant

NATURE OF GROUP: Only a fraction of criminals have a real need for cant. Those who speak it usually dwell in settlements big enough to support a community of habitual criminals. Depending on the settlement, they might belong to gangs as tightly organized as any professional guild or knightly order, or they might be a loosely affiliated bunch of crooks who occasionally work together. Loners, rural bandits, and rogues more interested in dungeon-delving than burglary are unlikely to have much use for it. On the other hand, anyone falling into these categories might have spent time among city-dwelling gangs and learned the local cant at that time.

WHAT THEY'RE HIDING: Cant allows criminals to make plans in public places in such a way as to confuse unwanted listeners. The list of crimes they can plot in detail is potentially endless.

SKILL: Criminals using cant are using the Innuendo skill, and you must make an Innuendo skill check to intercept the message.

MODIFIERS: The DC for your Innuendo skill check is determined by the complexity of the message and influenced by what your PC knows. The message mentioned above ("I tried to take some of his territory and he resisted, so I beat him up. Now he's part of my gang.") is very complex (DC 20). A less complicated message, like "He resisted. I beat him up," would be DC 15. A simpler one, like "I won," would be DC 10.

- You don't know the identity of their chosen victim: -2.
- You don't know the type of crime they're discussing: -2.
- You are unfamiliar with the criminal element of this particular city or town: -2.
- The criminals belong to a race or culture other than your own: -2.
- They're from your generation: +2.
- You've heard other members of the local underworld conversing in cant and understood: +2.
- You know these specific thieves: +2.
- You have committed the type of crime they're discussing: +2.
- If you have ranks in Knowledge (local), the DM might allow you to make a Knowledge (local) skill check (DC 20) to grant you a +2 circumstance bonus to your Innuendo skill check.

Urban Monsters

"That roundears be sharp-shocky: ugrunt, ugrunt."

CATEGORY: Cant and slang

NATURE OF GROUP: Some large, lawless cities include among their populations of poor and downtrodden a contingent of kobolds, orcs, goblins, or other humanoids. Even in lands dominated by chaos and evil, these beings are barely tolerated by the humans who surround them. If an urban monster population consists mostly of one race, they have no need for a cant. They can thwart the understanding of hostile humans just by speaking their mother tongue. When the group is mixed, it develops a rudimentary creole tongue mixing elements from the languages of the most significant monster populations.

WHAT THEY'RE HIDING: Urban monsters often survive by committing crimes, begging, and other unsavory means. They might create their own gangs specializing in extortion and other crimes of crude violence, or hire out as toughs working for human criminals or evil overlords. Either way, they'll often wish to hide their true thoughts from authorities and superiors. They might wish to conceal their opinion of a boss, their plan to overrun a neighborhood on a particular night, or the location of their weapons caches.

SKILL: To understand a conversation between such urban monsters, you'll need to make an Innuendo skill check.

MODIFIERS: The DC for your Innuendo skill check is determined by the complexity of the message and influenced by what your PC knows.

- You speak one of the mother tongues making up the creole: +1 per language other than Common.
- You have lived among humanoids of this type: +4.

Mystics

"The thunder grows louder as you ascend the snowy mountain, my son."

CATEGORY: Metaphor

NATURE OF GROUP: Mystics are practitioners of religions that teach that day-to-day reality is an illusion, and that the ultimate goal of the spiritual person is to learn to transcend this false world. Mystical traditions offer various ways of achieving this, but the one relevant to your Sense Motive skill is the contemplation of puzzling statements such as the one above. Mystics, who are often monks, use metaphors to teach enlightenment to those who seek it. The holiest of them speak almost entirely in these cryptic statements, which often refer to the great power and sublime beauty of nature. To understand what they're saying, you must typically resort to your Sense Motive skill.

WHAT THEY'RE HIDING: Mystics would argue that they're hiding nothing; instead, their enigmatic words offer a window into a greater truth. In some cases, though, they're merely trying to test a seeker's resolve or to train him in humility. As in any religious order, a small percentage of mystics are small-minded individuals who enjoy exercising authority, or even charlatans intent on fleecing seekers of enlightenment.

SKILLS: Some mystics use Innuendo to transmit a message to you. In these cases the mystic makes an Innuendo skill check and either succeeds or fails. At other times the mystic says something metaphorical and deliberately obscure to test your resolve or wit.

In either case, a failed Innuendo check or deliberate obfuscation, your DM might allow you a Sense Motive skill check (DC 20) to help you determine the mystic's intent.

MODIFIERS: If a mystic is a fake and using metaphor only to confuse you, your Sense Motive check is opposed by her Bluff check. If the mystic failed to use the Innuendo skill or is being deliberately obscure, you might be able to better guess at the implication of the mystic's words by discovering her emotional state or intentions (see the Innuendo and Sense Motive sidebar).

- You are familiar with the tradition the mystic belongs to (or is pretending to belong to): +4.
- You are well-acquainted with a similar tradition: +2.
- You have solved similar riddles from mystics of the order before: +2.

Village Priests

"Your dilemma brings to mind the story of Kord's gambling match with the Seven Lutes of Yaarl . . ."

CATEGORY: Metaphor or jargon

NATURE OF GROUP: Most religions in a D&D world are more down-to-earth than the various mystical traditions. Clerics who serve a particular community of worshipers centered around a church or temple tend to be pragmatic types who know the everyday problems of ordinary folk. Most of the time, they speak plainly, because they want their congregations to understand and follow their advice.

WHAT THEY'RE HIDING: Still, there are times when even these simple priests resort to obscure or metaphorical language. If you're receiving guidance, he might want to do no more than point you in the right direction. It is always more meaningful to discover something yourself than to accept someone else's answer.

There are also times when these eminently practical people know that the best advice, especially when dealing with an adventurer, is not quite in keeping with the things a cleric ought to be saying outright. When advising you to bend the rules, they'll speak opaquely and count on you to get the hint.

A priest might also want to furtively communicate something to a believer while in the presence of infidels (such as the PCs).

In all of these cases, priests draw on the well-known myths of the god they follow. Other worshippers will also know these stories and the lessons behind them. The priest will obliquely mention the story, relying on the listener to fill in the blanks and supply the meaning.

SKILL: When priests are trying to transmit a message to the PCs, they often use the Innuendo skill. In the case of a failed check or an intentionally obscure message, PCs might be able to determine something by getting a hunch about his emotional state or intentions with a Sense Motive check (DC 20). When attempting to understand the message that was transmitted by a priest to one of his followers, you must make an Innuendo skill check.

MODIFIERS: These are optional circumstance modifiers that apply to both Innuendo and sense motive skill checks to divine the priest's meaning.

- You don't worship the priest's god: -2.
- You don't know the story he refers to: -2.
- You haven't heard of his religion: -4.
- You are a believer: +2.
- If you have ranks in Knowledge (religion), the DM might allow you to make a Knowledge (religion) skill check (DC 20) to grant you a +2 circumstance bonus to your Sense Motive or Innuendo skill check.

Innuendo and Sense Motive

The Innuendo skill is used in two ways: to transmit a message or to ferret out the meaning of a message successfully transmitted to someone else. According to a strict interpretation of the rules, the Innuendo skill is not used to receive a message. Thus, if your companion tries to transmit a message to you using Innuendo and fails his Innuendo skill check, you don't understand what he really wants to tell you. Similarly, if two members of the Thieves' Guild are using the Innuendo skill to transmit messages to one another, your PC can only use the Innuendo skill to intercept those messages that the thieves successfully transmit. The Sense Motive skill is used in a few specific ways: to know when someone is using the Bluff skill against you, to make a gut assessment of a social situation or someone's trustworthiness, to determine a character's emotional state, to get a hunch that something is wrong, and to tell if someone is influenced by an enchantment.

The uses of these two skills never intersect. However, DMs might allow the subject of a failed Innuendo transmission to make a Sense Motive check to make a gut assessment of the transmitting character's emotional state and thus gain a hunch as to what might be so important that the character uses the Innuendo skill.

For example, while the PCs are negotiating the surrender of a notorious band of pirates, one of the PCs spots a group of them sneaking into good shooting positions. Not wanting to let the cutthroats know that she is aware of their treacherous intentions, she uses the Innuendo skill to tell the other PCs, "It's a trap. We should cast a *darkness* spell and run." Unfortunately, she fails utterly and her innocuous comment about the weather sounds like an innocuous comment about the weather rather than a warning. The DM might allow the PCs to make Sense Motive checks (DC 20, see the *Player's Handbook*) to get a hunch about their companion. In this case, a successful Sense Motive Check would reveal that the PC seems alarmed. Of course, if the DM allows the PCs to make free Sense Motive checks, the NPCs should be allowed to as well. On the other hand, if the PC in question is using the Bluff skill to seem calm so as not to alert the pirates, the PCs must make a Sense Motive check opposed by the PC's Bluff skill check.

Life of the Party

Champagne Wishes and Caviar Nightmares

by Geoffrey McVey

Temah's old gang would have been proud of her. Here she stood, dressed in fine silks, draped with jewelry, with a "borrowed" letter of introduction proclaiming her to be the niece of the baroness of Kilvaren. She eyed the wealthy crowd mingling in Lord Finmeric's hall, picking her targets for the evening with the same delight as she'd earlier chosen stolen rings for her fingers. Now all she had to do was . . .

"Well, well," murmured a cultured man's voice by her shoulder, "if it isn't Skinny Temah."

She whirled, remembering too late that she was supposed to look dignified. Facing her was a handsome half-elf in dark velvet, holding a glass of wine in each hand. He didn't bother to conceal the amusement on his face as Temah hissed, "That's Lady Danisc to you, Essendris. I'm here on business."

"What a coincidence," he answered airily, offering her a glass. "So am I. And that's Sir Morhallen to you. At least for this evening."

Why a Party?

Although "return to the dungeon" is the motto of the new edition of D&D, not every adventure must take place on the frontiers of civilization or in the depths of some forgotten ruin, and the enemy can wear a much friendlier face than a troll or a bugbear. When characters return from their latest quest and are spending time in a town or city making plans for the future, why not give them a different kind of adventure?

Socially-oriented scenarios can take a number of forms—festivals, coronations, diplomatic or mercantile negotiations, and so on. This article concentrates on one of these forms: parties. Parties open up new roleplaying opportunities, both for players and Dungeon Masters. For players, a party adventure is a chance for certain characters—bards and rogues in particular—to shine. Amid the feasting and exchanging of gossip, characters can be introduced to the world of politics, meet new people, and show off their social skills. For Dungeon Masters, this type of scenario is a way to highlight the fantasy cultures they have created, plant the seeds for new adventures, and bring players into contact with new NPCs without worrying about whether they are too powerful to defeat in combat.

As Dungeon Master, you must first consider if a social adventure is right for your players and their characters. If your game has concentrated on dungeon crawls or wilderness adventures and your players are happy, there's no reason to force them (or yourself) through a session they might not enjoy. On the other hand, social scenarios can provide an excellent change from those very dungeons and can also reward players for spending skill points in Diplomacy, Bluff, and other Charisma-based skills.

Plotting the Party

The major difference between a party scenario and a dungeon adventure is that parties are organized by time rather than space. In a dungeon, adventurers generally move from room to room and

trigger encounters depending on their locations. Monsters might move around throughout a dungeon, but the surest way to run into them is to venture into their lairs. During a party or other social scenario, characters are kept in a small, fixed area (a house, for example) but are free to move within that area as they please. While there might be some amount of exploration involved, most of the interaction at a party takes place in the open. NPCs are usually present and in motion, dealing with their own affairs and engaging in conversations with the players and one another.

By their very nature, social events require people in attendance. Your NPCs and their motivations can make the scenario a success or failure. While you don't need to describe every NPC in detail—some of them can and should be "extras"—it's good to have at least one NPC for every PC to interact with.

With many NPCs in attendance comes the possibility for a number of intrigues, and it is here that you come to the heart of the party adventure: layered plots and subplots. The party's host must have a reason for inviting all of his guests, and that reason will provide you with the central plot of your social scenario.

Below are four party adventure plot hooks to consider:

• The Countess of Casselmere is holding a lavish celebration on the occasion of her daughter's marriage to the Count of Marlasc. She has invited not only her family's friends, but also representatives from rival families so that they may witness the new alliance being formed between the two counties. Her intention throughout the party is to emphasize, as clearly as possible, the strength of Casselmere and Marlasc, and to begin making plans to claim certain disputed territories bordering both their lands.

• Rasmir Dor, an elderly dwarven merchant, throws a party ostensibly to welcome his third son, Elger, back from a profitable trading expedition. The rest of his children take their father's generosity as a sign that he intends to declare Elger the heir to his fortune. They have all brought expensive tokens of their own success to the party, that they might catch their father's eye. Rasmir expects this of his children, and he plans to use the party to test their loyalty to him and to each other.

• Every year, the temple of Yondalla holds a day-long celebration of the goddess's bounty and invites the local halflings to eat, drink, and trade stories at the home of the high priestess, Jessa Harlief. Word has begun to spread that Jessa has gained such favor with Yondalla that she can restore life to the dead, and many grieving families plan to join in the festivities to beg the priestess's help in returning their loved ones from the grave.

• After many years away from his village, the wizard Belwain has returned with great wealth and power. He invites many of his childhood friends to his home to show off his success, but his real plan is to take revenge on the people who taunted and scorned him when he was young. Over the course of the evening, he plans to publicly humiliate each one of them with incriminating information his hired investigators have gathered over the years.

The host's purpose in throwing a party can be innocent (as in the case of the priestess), political (the marriage), or manipulative (the merchant and the vengeful wizard). Their purpose can be undermined, however, by the intentions of the guests. Consider the first example again. When the rivals of Casselmere and Marlasc realize that they are being invited to a display of power, they send guests whose role it is to thoroughly sabotage the proceedings. One family sends a pair of diplomats with instructions to divert the countess's attention away from their own land and toward that of her other rivals. A second family sends a rogue armed with a love potion to slip into the groom's drink at an opportune moment. A third family, whose land is most directly threatened by the marriage, sends an assassin whose purpose is to commit a murder and lay the blame on another family.

In this particular scenario, your players might be guests with agendas of their own, or they might simply be invited because of their association with either the Casselmeres or the Marlascs. If there are rogues in the group, there is always the possibility that they are attending the party with forged invitations, hoping to make off with some of the daughter's dowry (or at least pick the pockets of some of the other guests). On the other hand, making the players into "accidental" guests who are stranded at the party because of inclement weather or coincidentally passing through the area at the right time has the advantage of making the party wild cards. In that case, none of the other power groups present at the party would know where the players' allegiances lie. These groups might try to sway the PCs to their own side with offers of rewards for information or treachery. Better yet, they might pin responsibility for their own schemes on these outsiders.

Charismatic Judgments

Making judgment calls on Charisma checks or Charisma-based skills can be tricky. If a player is tongue-tied and having trouble expressing herself, but her character is an elegant diplomat, you should consider giving her some leeway. Likewise, there are many players whose own talking skills outstrip those of their characters. If you rely entirely on the player's own ability to communicate, however, there's less reason for your players to invest skill points in social skills. Here are a couple of ideas to help you when dealing with matters of Charisma.

When playing out matters of diplomacy or etiquette, have the character make a skill check at the beginning of the scene. If it's successful, you can coach the player in ways to present herself more effectively. For example, you can tell the player: "In your diplomatic training, you learned that elves value elaborate praise" or "From the count's bearing, it's clear that he favors simple language." If the player fails her skill check, you can forgo the hints and have her rely entirely on her own ability or, when dealing with a player whose character has high Charisma, adjust the NPC's reactions to match the talents of the PC. If the player fails miserably at her skill check for instance, you can give her false information such as: "There's no higher praise than calling a drow 'sun-touched.'"

Preparation and Pacing

When preparing a social adventure, you should make a map, a list of attending NPCs, and a timeline. The map can be as simple or as complex as you desire. In the case of the marriage scenario, you might only need a sketched map of a keep, paying most attention to the public areas (the great hall, a few chambers, and the kitchens). The location should be large enough to be able to separate partygoers into smaller groups for more intimate conversation and intrigue, but not so large as to dwarf the number of guests. You might include a few secret passages and chambers if the setting is appropriate. In the vengeful wizard's scenario, for example, Belwain might use such passages to spy on his guests while he carries out his plans.

The list of NPCs provides a quick reference for names, roles, personalities, and motives. Their actual abilities (class, level, and so on) are only important if the NPC has a direct impact on the plot. As you create your list, start developing interrelationships among the guests that spiral off into their own subplots. Using the marriage scenario as an example again, you might decide that the emissaries sent by two of Casselmere's rivals know each other and are more interested in rekindling an old romance than carrying out their patrons' plans. Or you might decide that they are dire enemies, each determined to expose the other's plot and hoping to draw the players in as allies. Remember that not every guest has to have a hidden purpose in attending the party. Some might be there simply because they love good food, or because they like and respect the host. If your players remain alert and keep on the lookout for intrigue, however, even these minor NPCs can provide fun roleplaying moments by acting as red herrings.

In a real party, people mingle about, moving from conversation to conversation. A party scenario is no different, so keep your NPCs in motion. If any of your players are inactive, find ways to help them approach an NPC and talk, or let them overhear a significant conversation between a pair of guests nearby (such as an argument or a piece of gossip). The goal is to ensure that your players are always either doing something or thinking about what is going on around them. From time to time, give them enough of a break in the action that they can pass information on to each other and make connections between everything they have gathered so far.

The timeline will help you keep track of your NPCs. This simple chart tells you where your major characters are at any given moment and what they are doing. You don't need to keep track of everyone at all times—the gaps can be filled in with small talk, eating, or drinking—but you should be able to map out their general movements. For games in which NPCs are constantly making and carrying out their own plots, you need to make certain that they will have the opportunity to do so. A timeline is a convenient way to organize their movements and deflect attention from them by giving the players people to interact with at all times. If only one person leaves the great hall of your castle just before a theft takes place, everyone's attention will be on that particular person; if half a dozen people are unaccounted for (your players can't be everywhere, after all), the plot becomes more interesting. A timeline is also a vital organizational tool if you have several subplots unfolding simultaneously, since it provides you with an easy way to double check your plans and make certain that you haven't left anyone out.

When laying out your timeline, pay attention to the pacing of your adventure and set up events accordingly. If your purpose is to focus on interactions with NPCs, your players will need time to meet them and get a sense of who they are. Give them time to be introduced and make small talk before carrying on to the heart of your scenario. On the other

20 Reasons to Throw a Party

1. Wedding/betrothal
2. Wake/funeral
3. Birth of an heir
4. Religious festival
5. Visit by a long-lost friend
6. Child's return from school/training
7. Birthday
8. Completion of a successful quest
9. Gaining unexpected wealth
10. Diplomatic meeting
11. Commemoration of a past victory
12. Attempt to impress superiors
13. Child coming of age
14. Contest/tournament
15. Scholarly conference
16. Seasonal festival
17. Celebrate a performance or work of art
18. Celebration of new alliance
19. Moving into a new home
20. Unveiling new discovery or possession

New Uses for Old Skills

BLUFF (Cha): Banter. While moving from crowd to crowd in a party, particularly a party where one does not belong, the ability to engage in trivial but pleasing conversation is a must. Successful use of the Bluff skill (opposed by the conversation partner's Sense Motive check) enables the player to make appropriate small talk that reveals no information about her that she does not wish known.

HIDE (Dex): Blend into the Crowd. There are times when it is useful to be able to blend into the crowd, such as when you are eavesdropping on a conversation. Make a Hide check with a base circumstance penalty of -5 and a circumstance bonus of +1 per person in the crowd around you, opposed by the Spot check of the person you are eavesdropping on. If the crowd is on the move, you can move up to one-half your normal speed and continue blending into the crowd with no penalty. At more than one-half and up to your full speed, you suffer a -5 penalty.

SENSE MOTIVE (Wis): Understanding Groups. You get a good idea of the dynamics of a group (who's in charge, who is allied with whom, and so on). You must observe the social group for a minimum of 2 rounds before making the skill check. The DC is 15 + 1 for every person in the group. If successful, you determine general information about the group. The information gleaned from this skill is geared more toward interpersonal relationships than public or political ones.

hand, you could put the most dramatic events at the beginning: Start the game off with a murder or the discovery of a theft and watch your players scramble to investigate before they know anything about the other guests. In either case, you need to keep events flowing smoothly and quickly to maintain your players' interest. If there is a lull, tell the players that time passes, and move along to the next important scene. At the same time, don't rush them. They might simply need a few minutes to absorb all of the events and information that have been presented to them.

As you move toward the climax of your scenario, whether it is the pursuit of a criminal or a dramatic set of negotiations, move minor NPCs into the background so that your players can focus on the central plot. As explained above, a social adventure is organized by time. There is usually a point at which the party is meant to end: It might last an afternoon, an evening, or even an entire day, but eventually, it is time for guests to leave. The advantage of this arrangement is that you can use the time as an excuse to send minor characters back to their homes, conveniently ushering them offstage. It also means that your players will not have the time to change their plans or preparations (equipment or spells) while the party is going on. Most importantly, it provides you with a well-defined framework in which events can unfold. NPCs with agendas know that they must carry out their plans before the party ends and therefore need to act quickly.

Wrapping it Up

Once the party is over, the secret plots revealed, and the villains caught, it's time to reward the adventurers. Unlike dungeon scenarios, success at a party rarely entitles players to loot the bodies of their adversaries, so you'll need to reward your players in other ways. Besides the occasional monetary award a grateful NPC might hand out, you should also award your players noncombat experience points. The *Dungeon Master's Guide* (page 168) recommends treating these awards as if the level of the situation were equal to the level of the party, so a standard award for the party would be 300 XP x group level. Sometimes it can be difficult to judge how much and what kind of roleplaying a character needs to do to qualify for a full award. In the end, you will need to use your own judgement, but here are a few guidelines to help you:

- **Full Award (300 XP x group level):** Give this award to the group when they manage to foil an NPC's agenda completely. There should only be one or two of these situations possible in a party scenario. For example, successfully carrying out diplomatic negotiations, preventing an assassination, or revealing a plot before it is carried out.
- **Partial Award (200 XP x group level):** Give this award to the group when they participate in pivotal scenes with NPCs or significantly change the course of the plot through their roleplaying. In some cases, this is a "near victory" award, one that can be given out when your players don't solve a problem themselves, but set events in motion for others to solve it. In other cases, it is the award to give out to players who surprise you with clever or innovative roleplaying that forces you to rethink your plot. For example, alerting the local guard to an assassination attempt, damaging an NPC's ability to carry out her agenda, or revealing a plot after it has been carried out but still in time to catch the culprit.
- **Minor Award (100 XP x group level):** Give this award to the group when they discover and use valuable information, advance the plot through means not covered by the above awards, or to a specific player who roleplays a particular situation or scene well. For example, talking with an NPC long enough to uncover useful secrets about another NPC, uncovering an NPC's agenda, revealing a plot after it has been carried out and after the culprit has escaped.

Once the party is over, the secret plots revealed, and the villains caught, it's time to reward the adventurers.

Besides experience points, there are also social rewards your players gain for taking part in the adventure. Parties give characters a chance to meet new people, make friends and enemies, and develop new contacts. All of these can lead to further roleplaying and perhaps be the beginning of future adventures. The NPCs your players meet in this scenario can turn into patrons willing to fund the party's next adventure, allies willing to lend a hand in times of trouble, or bitter villains determined to extract revenge for the party's interference in their plans. Most importantly, a successful debut at one party can gain your players invitations to future parties, and give you an endless supply of new adventures to plan.

Essendris raised a questioning eyebrow as Temah dropped her icy glare and smiled sweetly. "What, finally falling for my charms Temah?"

"Don't flatter yourself," she hissed. As she lowered into a perfect curtsy, she was pleased to see Essendris blush.

A plump, plain-looking woman was heading directly for them, her arms outstretched. "You'll excuse me . . . ahem, Sir Morhallen," explained Temah as she stood again, "but my 'business' partner just arrived."

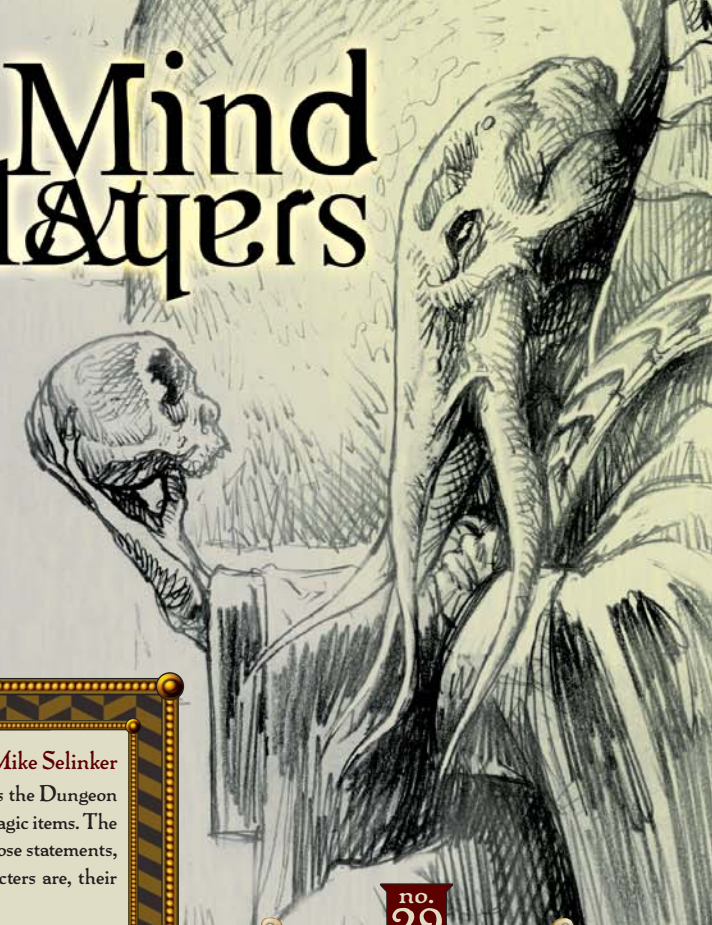
Essendris's eyes grew wide as he noticed the flashing gems at the portly woman's neck and fingers.

Temah turned and opened her arms to match the newcomer's gesture. "This one's mine, Morhallen, you'll have to find your own mark," she whispered over her shoulder at the half-elf. "And try not to look so greedy, there's plenty to go around." Temah finished just before embracing the other woman.

"My dear child," the wealthy woman clucked as she smothered Temah with a warm embrace. "So nice of you to come to our home on such a joyous occasion."

"So nice of you to have me, my lady." Temah curtsied again and waved a hand toward Essendris. "Do you know Sir Morhallen?" She winked at the half-elf as the older woman took his hand . . .

Mind flayers



MIND BLAST

Think of a sorcerer/wizard spell composed of two words, the first of four letters and the second of six letters. Now change the second-to-last letter in each word and you'll get a spell cast by druids and rangers. Which spells are these?

You can find the solution to this *MIND BLAST* on page 117

no. 30

by Mike Selinker

Barbra has invited four guys over to her basement to play D&D. One of them is the Dungeon Master, and the other four have rolled up starting 1st level characters without any magic items. The statements below were overheard in a single combat round in some order. Using those statements, can you tell who's the DM, who played what character, what classes those characters are, their order in the initiative sequence, and what they did?

1. "Alan, what're you making me go first for? Geez, I cast *sanctuary!* I ain't fighting him! Where're the Chee-Tos?"
2. "Darn! I would've attacked, but he's at 1 hit point. I can cure him a bit, I guess."
3. "I ready an action. After Ward attacks, I cast *silent image* so Izar sees an image of Ugnast where he was standing. Ward, you will remember to five-foot adjust backward this time, right?"
4. "That attack made Izar a bit cross. He can't find Palin, but he can find the barbarian. Take 15 points of damage."
5. "No. You can't take a five-foot step after a move and an attack. Read your freakin' *Player's Handbook*."
6. "Okay, that's an 18, a 13, a 9, and a 4. My guy gets a lowly 7 initiative. But it doesn't matter, 'cause you are so toast."
7. "Owww! Ceri!"
8. "Thanks a heap, Nate. Eric, will he get an attack of opportunity on me if I do what Arban wants? I'm moving, then attacking, then adjusting? Can I do that?"
9. "Totally cool! While I was in the kitchen, I noticed each of our classes—if you include the Dungeon Master—contains the letters in another person's real name, reading left to right. And each of our character names is also found like that in yet another person's class. So didja kill him?"

no. 29 SOLUTION

1. transmute metAL TO wood
2. Otto's irresistiBLE Dance
3. blaDE BARrier
4. clairaudiencE/CLAIRvoyance
5. shield oF LAW
6. soften eartH AND Stone
7. gHOST Sound
8. shrinK ITEm
9. fLAME Strike
10. pLANE Shift
11. aniMAL Trance
12. protection froM ARROWs
13. aniMATE Dead
14. calM EMOtions
15. Rary's mnemoNIC Enhancer
16. tempORAL Stasis
17. polymORPH ANy object
18. entroPIC Shield
19. sPIKE Stones
20. enduRE ELements
21. detect snaRES AND pits
22. fiRE STorm
23. Leomund's secRET CHESt
24. chaoS HAMmer
25. Drawmij'S INStant summons
26. Tasha's hideouS LAUGHTER
27. charm perSON OR Animal
28. blesS WATer
29. Nystul's undetecTABLE AUra
30. alTER SElf
31. wail of THE BANShee
32. Otiluke's freeZING Sphere

CITIES OF THE AGES

NOVGOROD

by Kenneth Hite
Illustrated by D. T. Strain

"Who can stand against God and Great Novgorod?"

—traditional Novgorodian motto

The mother of Russian cities, Novgorod bows her head to no one. Her prince is not allowed to live within her walls, her rivals smolder beneath the Mongol yoke, and her archbishop negotiates as an equal with caliphs and popes. A mighty commercial republic, a veritable Venice of the north, Novgorod sets its own destiny at the boreal crossroads of Asia and Europe. Novgorod's stone churches swell with beautiful holy icons, her monasteries groan with birchbark codices of lore, and her bards spin tales that enrapture all of Russia. Truly, Novgorod is the Realm of Wisdom, the Golden City, Gospodin Velikiye Novgorod—Lord Novgorod the Great. A city of wisdom, gold, and greatness; Novgorod is a city for heroes like yours.

HISTORY

Three small marsh settlements, one Finnish, one Slav, and one Norse, joined together in A.D. 854 as Novgorod, the "new town" on the banks of the Volkhov River above Lake Ilmen. The men of Novgorod, seeking unity, invited Prince Rurik the Varangian to rule them, and by his wisdom and energy he founded a number of cities up and down the rivers of Russia.

Rurik's descendants ruled Russia from Kiev, far to the south, and became enamored with the autocratic ways of Byzantium. Eventually, Novgorod fell under the sway of cruel and ignorant princes sent from Kiev. The people of Novgorod, having invited the princes to come rule the town in the first place, now invited them out, and in 1136, they expelled Prince Vsevolod Mstislavich from the city and refused to accept any new prince not of their choosing.

Instead of a prince, Novgorod chose a mayor, or posadnik, by way of an election in an immense town assembly, the veche, which was open to all free men of Novgorod. Over time, the veche became more organized, and the leading landowners, or boyars, took over the city's day-to-day governing. The boyars, assembled in the Soviet Gospod (the Council of Lords), make up the "three hundred golden belts" that actually govern the city. Meanwhile, the boyars were also extending Novgorod's power in the region, founding "little brother cities" like Velikiye Luki, Pskov, and Staraya Russa as river colonies, as well as building immense fur-trading empires reaching to the Arctic Ocean and the Ural Mountains. Between the furs, silver, and salt of the Novgorod land, the boyars built a mighty republic of the north, trading with the Hanseatic League of German merchant towns in the west and with the Saracen and Mongol empires of the east, as well as with Byzantium, Sweden, and Kiev. Of course, with foreign trade and wealth come foreign wars and threats; the Mongol hordes have since ravaged Russia and put Novgorod under tribute, and both the Swedes and Teutonic Knights chop away at the edges of the Novgorod land. Even the boyars can be forgiven for wishing for a saint or a crusading knight to save them—and in their new Prince, Aleksandre Nevsky, they might just have both.

"You would think it was the spring flood
Overflowing in the meadows,
But it is the crowd of Novgorod
Swelling and surging in Rogatitsa Street.
You would think it was geese and swans
Rising on Ilmen Lake,
But it is all the men of Novgorod
Gathering on the Volkhov Bridge."

—From the "Tale of Vasily Buslayev"

The magnificent wooden Volkhov Bridge, ornately carved along its 100-yard length, connects Novgorod's aristocratic "Sophia Side" on the west bank of the Volkhov River with its bustling "Market Side" on the east bank. The city's two sides are further divided into five ends, or kontsy, each of them responsible for their own share of the town's fortifications, and each capable of lowering thick wooden barriers across the streets and defending themselves during an invasion. Within the ends, the boyars' mansions enclose tens of smaller houses (usually with a central heated cabin, an outer lobby, and a privy) within wooden courtyard walls. Built up from these interlocking log compounds, the individual ends are almost as defensible as the city's kremlin, or citadel, also known as the Detinets. A 30-foot high wooden wall runs around the Detinets, resting on a clay, log, and landfill embankment; five wooden gatehouses allow the city's streets, which are paved with sawn half-logs, to continue inside the kremlin. The sixth gatehouse opens onto the Volkhov Bridge. The archbishop's palace, along with the cathedral of St. Sophia and the church of Saints Boris and Gleb, dominates the crowded Detinets.

The Neverski end, north of the Detinets, holds the houses of successful fur-traders along High Street and the

shops of shoemakers, leather-workers, and blacksmiths on the Street of Saints Cosmas and Damian. A slave market in the northern part of the Neverski end keeps all of these establishments well staffed with Finns, Lithuanians, Samoyeds, and other pagans. East of the Detinets, the houses of rich boyars line Prussian Street in the Zagorod end, along with the homes of jewelers, silversmiths, and other craftsmen. South of the Detinets, the Lyudin end holds potters, tinkers, and small farmers growing food in enclosed gardens. Such gardens, found throughout the city, provide much of the food Novgorod needs—the rest must be shipped in from Novgorod's colony towns since Novgorod's soil is poor and marshy.

Across the river from the Lyudin end lies the Slavno end, which is the oldest and poorest district in the city. The Lyudin end is neatly bisected by the Great Way running from the Volkhov Bridge, through Yaroslav's Court, and southeast into the heart of Slavno. It then continues east to the cemetery, outside the city walls. On Elijah Street in Slavno, the skomorokhi (fortune-telling bards who work with trained bears) have their own town, although they perform throughout the city. North of Slavno end is the Plotnicki end, where carpenters, shipwrights, millers, and weavers labor to build, expand, feed, and clothe Novgorod the Great. Here, much like everywhere in Novgorod, the air rings with hammers and saws at work building new structures.

ADVENTURES IN NOVGOROD

"Aie me! O noble merchants of Novgorod, O mighty prince, O all-powerful veche, what could a poor man such as I, Sadko the Bard, have to match against your glorious boasts? I have no golden treasure, I have no sweet wife. My music is a gift of God and not mine to boast of. I know of only one thing whereof I could boast, for I alone know that in Lake Ilmen swim fish with fins of gold!"

—From the "Tale of Sadko the Merchant"

The promise of riches and freedom has brought men and women to Novgorod ever since the days of the sagas, and the invasions of the Mongols in the east and the Teutonic Knights in the west bring still more people to Novgorod, either as desperate refugees or as spies. Wherever your heroes fit in, Novgorod welcomes them. Here are a few adventure hooks upon which your heroes can hang glorious tales from the Chronicles of Novgorod.

• The forests of the "Novgorod land" stretch for hundreds of miles, or versts, below the midnight sun, the richest fur-trapping country in the world. While any trader can return with marten, sable, squirrel, or mink, the furs that bring the richest prizes require special hunters. The Germans of the Peterhof pay a premium for bugbear pelts, winter wolf furs, frost worm leather, remorhaz carapaces, or white dragon skins.

• The city of Novgorod fears little except fire. Built almost entirely of wood, it risks destruction from every open spark; the fires of 1211, 1217, and 1230 each destroyed over a quarter of the city. However, old-timers still recall the mysterious fires of 1194, which flared up—and would just as suddenly die down—all year for no known reason. Now, a similar pattern is happening in the Slavno end. Is it a rogue arsonist working a protection racket, a wizard getting careless with her spellcraft, or the opening of an invasion by mephits from the Elemental Plane of Fire?

• The skomorokhi sing the tales of the piratical river-giant Vasily Buslayev, who defended Novgorod from invaders in the age of legend a century ago. He set out on the river, vowing to return when he got homesick. If a band of heroes were to find the giant and bring him back to Novgorod, it just might turn the tide of the war against the Teutonic Knights or even spark a crusade to liberate holy mother Russia from the Mongol hordes. Then there's the question of what Vasily did with all the treasure he looted over a hundred years ago . . . .

• Strange lightning and sudden storms strike all around the Church of the Nativity at Peryn, south of the city on the shore of Lake Ilmen. Could the pagan thunder god Perun be awakening on the spot named after him? Or could the feared Zmei, the blue dragon who guards the gateway to the Otherworld, be awakening in Lake Ilmen long after his defeat by the hero Sadko the Merchant?

LOCATIONS

Yaroslav's Court: This great courtyard in the heart of the Market serves as the meeting place for the veche. During sessions, wooden bleachers hold leading citizens; at other times, the courtyard remains open for trade, skomorokh performances, or military assemblies. Underneath the square (the largest open space in Novgorod), a yard-thick layer of interlocking cow jawbones bolsters the planking. On the east side of the square rises St. Nicholas's Church, an imposing stone structure domed with gilded wood. On the east side is the Palace of Yaroslav the Wise, formerly the residence of the Prince of Novgorod. It is now the office of the Soviet Gospod, the posadnik, and the clerks of the city. Inside the Yaroslav Palace is the great veche bell, which rings to summon the citizens to meetings. By ancient right, any citizen of Novgorod can ring the veche bell.

Church of St. John the Baptist at Opoki: North of Yaroslav's Court, behind a row of stalls and churches, lies the great Torg, or Market Square. Here, all the merchants of Novgorod trade for goods, raise funds for expeditions to the north and east, and hire rogues and bravos for delicate business. The great Torg holds not only grain, hides, and clothing shops, but also the offices of the traders in wax and honey, two of Novgorod's most important exports. The wax-and-honey merchants' guild, as chief of the "John's Hundred" merchant guilds, sponsors the Church of St. John on the east side of the Torg. Here, the official weights and standards of Novgorod lie in state; the guild charges other merchants a fee to weigh their goods on scales calibrated to the ones in St. John's. Outside, the hum of bees rises under the chanting of priests and the haggling of peddlers.

Peterhof: Two blocks west of the Torg, on the corner of Great Moscow Street and the Street of Elijah, the Hanseatic League of German merchants keeps its own goods walled away behind high wooden palisades. The toughest German mercenaries guard the "German Courtyard" and keep

Using Novgorod with the Red Sails Campaign Setting

Novgorod the Great can easily be placed in any Dark Ages campaign, and it is the same Russian city mentioned in the Red Sails campaign setting. For more background information about the setting and some ideas of how to place Novgorod into your campaign, see "Tempests on the Steppes" on pages 30-43.

The Mongol Hordes

Pouring out of the mysterious East in unstoppable waves, the Mongols seem—to the Russians at least—to be demons spawned from Hell for the punishment of Christendom. (Indeed, the name of the Mongol tribe, the Tatars, means men of Tartarus.) With their cruelty, wiry physique, and tireless appetite for slaughter, they seem inhuman indeed—as does the scale of their devastation of Russia. Perhaps these "Mongols" are, in fact, an immense army of orcs led by titans from the pit of Tartarus!

The Mongol invasion in 1237 also fundamentally altered Novgorod's relationship with the rest of Russia. Although Novgorod had always been more independent than most cities, the Mongols destroyed every one of Novgorod's rivals, and subjected the rest of the Russian aristocracy to their yoke. Although the Princes of Vladimir-Suzdal, Kiev, and other cities might claim ancient rights over Novgorod, without the Mongols' permission, they can do nothing. Some in Novgorod think that the time is ripe for the city to declare total independence and perhaps even join the Hanseatic League as a full member. Others, including Prince Aleksandre, fear that defying the Mongols would bring similar devastation down on their beloved Novgorod. Right now, the Mongol armies plunge deeper into Europe—but who knows when, or if, they will return?

strangers out. Inside, the Hanse factors buy and sell Novgorod's finest goods. The Germans worship at St. Peter's Church nearby, and their mansion compound bears the name "Peterhof" as a result. Germans who commit crimes in Novgorod must be turned over to the Peterhof for justice.

Pleskauer Palace: Both smaller and older than the Peterhof is Pleskauer Palace, located on the Street of St. Michael running south from Yaroslav's Court. Unlike the Peterhof, the Pleskauer Palace has its own docks, where the cogs and barges from Sweden and Gothland unload their cargoes of iron, cloth, and fish. Like the Germans, Swedes and Goths must be returned to their own people for trial. Both the Pleskauer and Peterhof hold spies from Novgorod's enemies, and even members of the feared Teutonic Knights of the Sword might lurk here incognito.

St. Sophia Cathedral: The tallest of the six domes of this magnificent stone cathedral towers 120 feet into the air. Two immense bronze doors, captured from Sigtuna in Sweden in 1187, lead into the portal on the west face of the cathedral. Biblical scenes and sacred inscriptions in Glagolitic runes cover the doors. Inside the cathedral, beautiful frescoes and icons capture the torchlight through incense-filled air. The archbishop's wooden palace connects to the cathedral at the northwest corner. Unlike Western cathedrals, St. Sophia does not serve as a marketplace or meeting-hall for merchants or tradesmen. Instead, they meet in the open square to the south.

Gorodishche: About a verst south of the city, the Prince of Novgorod has his official residence in a fortified hill complex on the east bank of the Volkhov across the river from the Monastery of St. George, the chief monastery of Novgorod's "black clergy," the monks. The Gorodishche dominates the land approaches to the city from the southeast, but without the support of the townsfolk, the Prince can neither close the river nor open the city to an oncoming army. Below the fortifications, a small but thriving market quay supplies the citadel and the nearby Church of the Annunciation.

LOCAL HEROES

All characters are presented as of 1241. Character levels are suggestions, and you should change them to suit your campaigns.

Heinrich von Brighoff (born 1210?)
4th-level expert/5th-level rogue
This Lübeck ship captain serves his home city as the factor in charge of the Hanseatic trade with Novgorod. His men enforce strict controls over all imports and exports to the West, which gives him a finger in many different pies. He has allies among the invading Teutonic Knights and among the Novgorod boyars, between whom he tries to walk a narrow path of favors and information peddling.

Aleksandra Bryacheslavna (born 1225?)
2nd-level aristocrat/6th-level druid
The daughter of the ruler of Polotsk, Aleksandra only converted to Christianity upon her marriage to Prince Aleksandre in 1239. She retains family connections among the pagan Chusks of northern Livonia, and her background makes her more willing to defy the Church on Aleksandre's behalf.

Domash Tverdislavich (born 1200?)
1st-level aristocrat/8th-level ranger
The brother of the current posadnik, Domash serves as the tysyatski, or military commander, of Novgorod's one thousand troops. Unusual for a townsman, he knows the surrounding countryside intimately, having hunted there his entire life. He, too, has allies among the pagan tribes.

Olisey Grechin (born 1190?)
1st-level aristocrat/7th-level cleric
Despite his Greek nationality, Olisey has risen to become the archimandrite, or chief monk, of Novgorod. His monastic name is Father Savva. A cultured and cosmopolitan man, he is also a gifted fresco painter, who has made his Monastery of St. George a place of rare beauty. He resents Spiridon for becoming archbishop instead of him. This, and his condescension to the Russian clergy, fuels the rivalry between monks and priests in Novgorod.

Spiridon (born 1190?)
7th-level cleric
Now the Orthodox Archbishop of Novgorod, Spiridon was a former monk who now completely identifies with the "white clergy" or Orthodox priesthood. Brave, competent, holy, and energetic, Spiridon vigorously defends the Church's prerogatives, Prince Aleksandre, Novgorod, and Christ, in roughly that order.

Stefan Tverdislavich (no known dates)
1st-level aristocrat/4th-level expert/4th-level fighter
Holding the position of Posadnik of Novgorod since the riots of 1230, Stefan is an expert at urban political infighting and a canny merchant with a sharp eye for new opportunities. Very little happens in Novgorod without Stefan's knowledge, and he encourages all other rivalries in order to keep Novgorod's boyars and merchants firmly in the saddle. He seeks to encourage trade with the East to counterbalance the Hanseatic Germans and eagerly sponsors explorers and prospectors.

Timofey (no known dates)
2nd-level bard/3rd-level cleric
This well-liked, honest priest serves as Sacristan of the Church of St. James and is the current compiler of the Novgorod Chronicle, the town history. He also has a great store of other histories, monster lore, and tales of the old gods and heroes. He will gladly trade tidbits of information with any interesting stranger.

Aleksandre Yaroslavich, Prince of Novgorod (born 1220)
7th-level aristocrat/5th-level paladin
Youthful, brilliant, and charismatic, Aleksandre is heir to Grand Prince Yaroslav of Vladimir-Suzdal. Ever since his amazing defeat of the Swedes on the River Neva in 1240, he is known as "Aleksandre Nevsky." However, his youth and brilliance make him autocratic, which is why rebel boyars drove him out of the city last year; he returned (to great public acclaim) only a few months ago.

Andrei Yaroslavich (born 1222)
6th-level aristocrat/3rd-level fighter
Andrei is Prince Aleksandre's brother. His weak character and jealousy often involve him in plots and schemes against the Prince. He knows better than to openly rebel, especially since he reluctantly respects his brother's military genius. He is currently conniving to be named Grand Prince of Vladimir after his father dies, which would neatly allow him to outrank Aleksandre.

The Heroes of "Decent Into the Depths of the Earth"

by Paul Kidd • illustrated by Todd Harris

The adventurers from the Jus and Escalla novels are certainly not your average group of adventurers: a warrior for justice, a sentient hell hound pelt, and a dodgy faerie princess. Between them they manage to doggedly pursue their adventure goals—but not without collateral damage.

Central to the party is the Justicar—a grim, almost monastically dedicated warrior for justice. His blade is deadly, his armor is black, he forgoes material wealth, and he devotes himself to his personal quest for justice. His life would have been far simpler, and far less colorful and worthwhile, without the sudden addition of a new group of partners and friends.

The Justicar (whose real name is Evelyn) was forced to take Escalla along on an adventure—at first at sword point, but later there was no getting rid of her. Escalla and Jus became inseparable. Both of them apparently tailor-made to drive the other mad. After long journeys and a fistful of insights, however, it seems that wedding bells might actually be in the air—if the big bad warrior could only get up the guts to pop the question. . . .

On their travels, Jus and Escalla have acquired other friends. Henry the young soldier and former village militiaman, Enid the shy sphinx and bookworm, and Polk the annoying git and self-proclaimed guidance counselor to heroes everywhere.

What's life without a few problems?

All the characters are presented as they appear at the end of *Descent Into the Depths of the Earth*.

THE JUSTICAR

APPEARANCE

The Justicar is a huge, shaven-headed, brooding man. He stands well over 6 feet in height. Obsessed with the pursuit of justice, he wanders Oerth with his companions, seeking to right wrongs. The Justicar is often mistaken for simply another dumb fighter, but he is quite intelligent and fond of using his natural cunning to catch opponents off guard.

BACKGROUND

Jus fought as a guerrilla behind enemy lines during the luz wars, and he cut his teeth fighting against luz's demonic servitors. In combat he is lethal, ignoring wounds and fighting with terrifying ferocity and cunning.

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

The Justicar has no time for man-made laws. What sparks him into fury is true injustice. He protects little people preyed on by the powerful and obliterates evil bandits, monsters, and overlords. He dislikes falsehood and has contempt for machinations and intrigue.

Jus uses his skills to investigate and follow trails, then deals with the enemies of justice—permanently. He has no use for wealth or fripperies, keeping only the tools needed for his tireless work.

Jus has total contempt for gods and religions. He sees the gods as powerful beings who prey on lesser creatures for their own ends. The Justicar's powers come from something more primal.

Jus is a font of wilderness and arcane lore. He knows the weaknesses and habits of creatures likely to be his enemy. He is a realist, and he is skilled at knowing when to withdraw and fight again. His equipment is calculated to

allow him to march fast, hard, and silently. His armor is easy to tend, has no bright colors, and makes little noise. He carries no bow, since he finds it difficult to move quietly if so equipped.

Jus tries to gather intelligence on any foe he is about to face. He then does his best to create an ambush so he can fight opponents on his own terms. He follows three simple principles: always anticipate problems in advance, always strike from an unexpected angle, and attack with unremitting fury. His choice of hiding place is always clever; he can literally disappear beneath leaf litter or swing up over the side of a bridge or precipice.

The Justicar is a master of the fast draw, and he can kill an enemy with one blindingly swift draw of his sword. He is extremely skilled in unarmed combat, and he works limb breaks, kicks, and massive punches into his combat routines.

THE COMPANIONS

So much for Jus as he tries to be. A spanner was thrown in the works when Escalla appeared in his life. Her scams, vanity, and charismatic enthusiasm became the foil to his grim persona. The two characters are now inseparable. She frustrates him, infuriates him, and he couldn't live without her.

Cinders is Jus's treasured friend—a sly partner who is much beloved. Jus takes good care of Cinders, grooming him and using spells to ensure the hound is always in good repair.

The Justicar takes the training of Henry very seriously, and he tries to teach the boy everything he knows. Jus is fond of Enid, who is one of the few people who ever talks real sense.

Polk is the bane of Jus's life.

CINDERS

Like Benelux, Cinders is both a companion and a powerful tool that enhances the Justicar's abilities. Cinders is an intelligent hell hound hide, normally worn by the Justicar as a cloak. Cinder's head perches over Jus's helmet. Cinders operates as an entirely independent creature, but he has a close link with Jus.

Cinders was once a hell hound pack leader. In the transition from normal hell hound to friend of the Justicar, Cinders has lost some of his abilities. He can use his breath weapon (a 30-foot cone of fire) three times a day. It deals 1d4+1 points of

JUSTICAR

Male Human, 10th-level Ranger

Strength	20	(+5)	Fort. Save	+13	Armor Class	20
Dexterity	13	(+1)	Ref. Save	+7	Flat-footed AC	19
Constitution	16	(+3)	Will Save	+9	Touch AC	11
Intelligence	10	(+0)	Alignment	CG		
Wisdom	16	(+3)	Speed	30		
Charisma	8	(-1)	Size	M		
Hit Points	89		Melee Attack	+20/+15	Ranged Attack	+11/+6

Special: Proficient with all simple and martial weapons, light and medium armor, and shields; favored enemy (demons +3, undead +2, magical beasts +1); fight with two weapons.

Skills: Climb +5*, Gather Information +5, Hide +7*, Listen +9, Move Silently +5*, Search +6, Sense Motive +4, Speak Language (Elven, Dwarven), Spot +11, Swim +5*, Wilderness Lore +10.

*Includes the -2 armor check penalty from his armor or the weight of his typical gear (Swim only).

Feats: Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Improved Unarmed Strike, Quickdraw, Improved Critical (bastard sword), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Track (bonus feat).

Languages: Common, Elven, Dwarven.

Possessions: *Benelux***, *ring of charm resistance***, *+3 ring of defense***, *+1 black dragonhide armor of acid resistance* (acts as *+1 hide armor*), *pendant of continual flame*.

***See the New Magic Items sidebar.*

Spells Prepared (2/2; base DC = 13 + spell level): 1st—*light*†, *resist elements;* 2nd—*cure light wounds, silence*†.

†In the course of his travels, the Justicar has learned to use two spells—*light* and *silence*—not normally available to rangers.

NEW MAGIC ITEMS

Ring of charm resistance: This ring negates all Enchantment spells of 4th level or lower cast at the character. In addition, the ring provides a +2 luck bonus to all saving throws against Enchantment spells of 5th level and above. **Caster Level:** 7th; **Prerequisites:** Forge Ring, *spell immunity, resistance;* **Market Price:** 26,200 gp; **Cost to Create:** 13,100 gp + 1,048 XP.

Ring of defense: This powerful ring offers continual magic protection in the form of a deflection bonus to AC and a resistance bonus to saving throws, from +1 to +5. **Caster Level:** 7th; **Prerequisites:** Forge Ring; *shield of faith, resistance,* caster level must be three times that of the ring's bonus; **Market Price:** 4,000 gp (+1); 16,000 gp (+2); 36,000 gp (+3); 64,000 gp (+4); 100,000 gp (+5); **Cost to Create:** 2,000 gp + 160 XP (+1); 8,000 gp + 640 XP (+2); 18,000 gp + 1,440 XP (+3); 32,000 gp + 2,560 XP (+4); 50,000 gp + 4,000 XP.

Benelux: A *+5 intelligent holy bastard sword of disruption* capable of speech, *Benelux* is fussy, irritating, prim, and prissy but willing to cooperate. The sword was made from material taken from the positive energy plane, and she has 10 ranks of the Sense Motive skill. She also gives the Justicar access to the Blind-Fight and Combat Reflexes feats (reflected in the stats above). *Benelux* has the following abilities: Intelligence 17, Wisdom 14, Charisma 10. The sword has an ego of 17. Although neutral good, *Benelux* has a lawful bent to her personality. The sword radiates a pure white light when drawn. Although she enjoys the Justicar's company (she enjoys a good fight) she can't stand Escalla. She considers the faerie to be an extremely unfit companion for a hero, and the two are forever bickering at one another.

Benelux's one pleasure in life is that Jus uses her to fight injustice—and that he fights with a level of skill she has never seen before. *Benelux* would resist being used for evil purposes; but this will never be a factor as long as Jus carries her.

ESCALLA

Female Faerie, 10th-level Evoker

Strength	2	(-4)	Fort. Save	+8	Armor Class	19
Dexterity	18	(+4)	Ref. Save	+12	Flat-footed AC	14
Constitution	10	(+0)	Will Save	+11	Touch AC	15
Intelligence	18	(+4)	Alignment	CN		
Wisdom	8	(-1)	Speed	20, fly 60 (good)		
Charisma	20	(+5)	Size	T		
Hit Points	27		Melee Attack	+3	Ranged Attack	+9

Special: Proficient with the club, dagger, heavy crossbow, light crossbow, and quarterstaff; spell-like abilities: at will—*polymorph self, charm person* (Escalla must touch the target); natural invisibility (as a pixie); +4 luck bonus to saves vs. spells of the Necromancy and Enchantment school.
Skills: Alchemy +6, Appraise +5, Bluff +11, Concentration +15, Gather Information +6, Hide +14, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Listen +1, Move Silently +8, Search +6, Spellcraft +15, Spot +3.
Feats: Combat Casting, Empower Spell, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Evocation), Spell Penetration.
Languages: Common, Elven, Abyssal, Sylvan.
Possessions: *Staff of frost* (35 charges), *ring of charm resistance, +5 ring of defense***, portable hole, pendant of continual flame.* Escalla always carries a few *potions of giant growth* (treat as *potions of enlarge*—5th-level), but she is extremely reluctant to part with these.
***See the New Magic Items sidebar.*
Spells Prepared (5/6/6/5/5/3; base DC = 14 + spell level): 0—*read magic, detect magic, detect poison, light;* 1st—*grease, magic missile* ×3, *silent image, expeditious retreat;* 2nd—*resist elements, web* ×2, *detect thoughts, flaming sphere, protection from arrows;* 3rd—*dispel magic, fireball* ×2, *lightning bolt, stinking cloud;* 4th—*minor globe of invulnerability, Evard's black tentacles, ice storm, fire shield, polymorph other;* 5th—*wall of force, fireball* (empowered), *lightning bolt* (empowered).
Spellbook (all of the above as well as the following): 1st—*mage armor, summon monster I;* 2nd—*blur, summon monster II;* 3rd—*slow;* 4th—*stoneskin, summon monster IV, wall of fire.*

damage with a Reflex save DC of 13 (save for half).

Not all of the side effects of Cinders's transformation are limiting. His increased telepathic ability has seemingly sharpened other senses, as well. Cinders can automatically see through all illusions. He retains his sharp hearing (Listen +7), his scent ability, and his darkvision. He also provides the Justicar with some additional powers when worn:

While Cinders is worn by the Justicar, Jus gains a +2 bonus on all Reflex saves, as well as a +4 competence bonus to all Spot, Search, Wilderness Lore, and Listen checks. Cinders is immune to fire, which gives the Justicar fire resistance 10 while Cinders is worn. (These bonuses aren't factored in above.)

Cinders's alignment is CN. Treat him as an intelligent cloak with an Intelligence of 12, a Wisdom of 14, a Charisma of 10, and an Ego of 8. He has a tendency to make jokes, which often involves setting things on fire.

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Cunning, sly, and with a good sense of humor, Cinders finds Jus's foibles funny, and he loves Escalla to bits! Cinders can wag his tail, and move his ears and his head a little to aim his flame blast.

Cinders is no longer evil. In fact, there's nothing he likes more than being told how good he is.

Cinders guards the party at night, since his senses are sharp and he never sleeps. Cinders often gets carried away in combat and lets loose with flame attacks when he really shouldn't.

ESCALLA

APPEARANCE

Escalla is a tiny, near-perfect replica of an elven woman—with wings, of course. Extraordinarily beautiful and expressive, Escalla is a bundle of restless energy. She clothes herself in the most shameless, barely there outfits, which, when combined with her just about 18 inches of height, have lured some enemies into thinking her helpless.

BACKGROUND

Before joining up with Jus, Escalla was a faerie princess in self-imposed exile from her father's court. She traveled to the Material Plane in search of escape and adventure and found more than she bargained for in the Justicar and Cinders. She's the fire to Jus's ice, and both have found that they can't live without each other.

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Sly, charismatic, happy, enthusiastic, and absurdly vain, Escalla is pure style. Escalla imagines herself to be supremely intelligent—far smarter than any opposition. She is therefore wildly overconfident. She is infuriating, lovable, and utterly irrepressible. She always has a sly comment or an off-color joke to share, and she forever primps and poses in the limelight.

Escalla is a fluent, constant liar. She makes up stories and delights in tricking the dim. She uses her polymorphing ability to run all kinds of scams. The Justicar is trying desperately to keep her honest, but Escalla loves fast-talking her way past guards, confusing the opposition, and creating natty little diversions and traps. She often befriends or bemuses monsters as an alternative to fighting. Jus is the only person whom she can never fool.

Escalla also has a nasty streak. She fights fanatically to protect her friends, and she is evilly inventive in her use of spells. When riled, she is often way too impulsive to be bothered calculating the blast zones of her devastating *fireballs*.

Her magic has a bees theme. *Magic missiles* look like bee swarms, and her *lesser globe of invulnerability* uses little bees to intercept incoming spells. Escalla also seems to get on well with giant ants and other insects—although spiders are definitely not her thing.

Escalla adores Henry and Enid, finds Polk funny, and is clearly in love with the Justicar. She is extremely close to Cinders, and the two of them have a wonderful rapport (they share the same jokes at Jus's expense). Escalla often takes point, turning invisible to scout the way ahead. She retreats swiftly at need, then orchestrates a savage attack combining spells and Jus's sword.

She's quite creative with her native polymorphing ability. She will turn into wafer thin creatures to peek under doors, worms to slither through keyholes, or a poisonous cone shell to stab anyone dumb enough to grapple her.

Escalla has hefty combat spells and is quite happy to use them in the most cunning way possible. Her *staff of frost* is a wonderful tool. Many times she has chased someone screaming down a corridor and made an ice wall for them to crash into, or sealed them in a cave and summoned monsters into the area to beat the living daylights out of them.

Escalla is extremely fond of "cool" treasures. These include any magic, jewelry, and scrolls.

PRIVATE HENRY

APPEARANCE

A lanky human in late adolescence, Private Henry has come a long way from village militiaman. Although he's still obviously quite young, he wears his armor and weapons like he knows what to do with them. His equipment is obviously well-cared for, and it has just as obviously seen some action.

BACKGROUND

Private Henry inadvertently joined the rest of the companions on the party's trek to defeat the drow and has been part of the group ever since. When he first met the party, he was a new recruit to the local militia, shy, and quite nervous. He has since adopted the Justicar as a role model, and Jus teaches him constantly. Henry always refers to the Justicar as "Sir," and clearly worships him as a hero.

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Henry is helpful but inexperienced. He's utterly brave, but he's smart enough to do what the Justicar tells him.

HENRY

Male Human, 3rd-level Fighter

Strength	14	(+2)	Fort. Save	+6	Armor Class	18
Dexterity	14	(+2)	Ref. Save	+3	Flat-footed AC	16
Constitution	16	(+3)	Will Save	+3	Touch AC	12
Intelligence	10	(+0)	Alignment	NG		
Wisdom	14	(+2)	Speed	30		
Charisma	12	(+1)	Size	M		
Hit Points	31		Melee Attack	+8	Ranged Attack	+6

Special: Proficient with all simple and martial weapons, all armor, and shields.
Skills: Climb +4, Hide +3, Jump +4, Listen +3, Move Silently +3, Search +1, Spot +3, Swim +4, Wilderness Lore +3.
Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (repeating crossbow), Improved Initiative, Quickdraw, Weapon Focus (bastard sword).
Languages: Common.
Possessions: *+1 elven chain, +1 repeating crossbow of speed, +2 bastard sword, ring of charm resistance**, +2 ring of protection, pendant of continual flame.*

***See the New Magic Items sidebar.*

ENID

Gynosphinx

Strength	19	(+4)	Fort. Save	+7	Armor Class	21
Dexterity	12	(+1)	Ref. Save	+7	Flat-footed AC	20
Constitution	13	(+1)	Will Save	+8	Touch AC	10
Intelligence	18	(+4)	Alignment	N		
Wisdom	19	(+4)	Speed	40, fly 60 (poor)		
Charisma	19	(+4)	Size	L		
Hit Points	60		Melee Attack	+11 (2 claws)		

Special: Rake: attack bonus +11 melee, damage 1d6+2; spell-like abilities: 3/day—*clairaudience/clairvoyance, detect magic, read magic, see invisibility;* 1/day—*comprehend languages, locate object, dispel magic, remove curse, legend lore.* These abilities are as the spells cast by a 14th-level sorcerer (save DC = 14 + spell level). Once per week, a gynosphinx can create a *symbol of death, discord, insanity, pain, persuasion, sleep,* and *stunning* (one of each) as the spell cast by an 18th-level sorcerer (save DC 22).
Skills: Appraise +6, Concentration +8, Diplomacy +8, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (history) +6, Knowledge (geography) +6, Knowledge (religion) +6, Listen +13, Spellcraft +10, Spot +13.
Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Scribe Scroll.
Languages: Common.
Possessions: Enid is often the custodian of party healing potions. Her personal library (stored in the party's *portable hole*) covers a huge range of topics. It is her pride and joy. She also wears a pendant enspelled with *continual flame.*

Henry was initially enthralled to find himself in the company of a real faerie princess, and Escalla instantly warmed to him. Henry is a clear soulmate for Enid. He also listens to the reams of "good" advice Polk constantly offers.

Henry is a good fighter and has picked up some of the Justicar's lessons of stealth, surprise, caution, and battlefield intuition. He really came into his own when he found his magic crossbow.

In a fight, Henry often takes out the smaller opponents, freeing Jus and Escalla to tackle larger, more dangerous enemies. He often takes the role of rear guard and supports the Justicar with either missile fire or melee as needed.

On a long adventure, Henry and Enid often deal with "trivial foes" side by side, since they do not want Escalla to waste her spells.

ENID

APPEARANCE

Despite being covered in freckles, Enid is quite imposing. Standing nearly 7 feet tall at the shoulder, her well-muscled leonine body is covered in golden fur. She has razor sharp talons and sharp teeth that she doesn't hesitate to put to use in a fight. Her feathery wings are typically folded along her back, as she prefers to walk with her friends

BACKGROUND

Enid is the sphinx who guarded a corridor junction in White Plume mountain.

Freckled, a tad shy, and sweet, she has become an inseparable part of the group. She has an attachment to books and knowledge, and found that there was a greater opportunity for gathering information adventuring than guarding a corridor.

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Dear, genial Enid is polite and calm. She is Escalla's close friend, and the two of them get along wonderfully well. Enid is a tad innocent, curious, and well mannered. She loves her riddles and is an enthusiastic reader. She is usually content to follow Escalla into adventures, keen to be helpful. She has the common sense Escalla lacks, and so never gets into as much trouble.

As a sphinx, Enid can be impressive in combat. She works in concert with the fighters, often keeping Henry out of trouble. Her *stun symbols,* which are her speciality, are also quite useful.

She is well read, but she rarely flaunts it. Enid is a little shy, quite sensible, and asks questions that make her companions think about what they're doing. She serves primarily as a fighter and a foil to Escalla's impulses. Enid comes up with good tricks and ideas and is a good source of knowledge.

POLK

APPEARANCE

Once a rather portly, middle-aged human who never stopped talking, Polk has recently been reincarnated as a badger. The furry, four-legged version of the teamster looks much more fearsome, despite his size.

BACKGROUND

Polk was once a wagoner, but then decided he was an adventurer's travel consultant. He sees his role in life as educating and polishing heroes. Jus is Polk's life work. He wants Jus to act like a "real" hero—wear silver armor, fight fair, issue challenges, and several other types of behavior that would probably result in Jus getting killed.

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

Polk is a vital, indispensable part of the adventuring team. He is there to coach the Justicar and tell "his boy" how to fight, duck, and dodge. With perfect hindsight he will inform Jus how to avoid traps that have already sprung, or deliver long diatribes about the importance of stealth when Jus is long gone (having already completed stalking his prey, thumped it dead, and come home). He is a constant font of good advice, reminiscences, and comments on the inability of "his boy" to learn the hero's trade. He has an immense appetite for alcohol, wears a god-awful hat, and calls his carting business "Transports to Advencher" (his spelling is as legendary as his mouth).

Polk is an avid believer that heroes must be heroic. He tries to prod the Justicar into taking the "proper" course of action. "Real heroes" do not attack from behind. They wear silver armor, ride dragons, and speak in iambic pentameter. He is also a great believer in adventuring equipment; Polk usually arranges for the party to have iron spikes, coils of rope, and even 10-foot poles—an item anyone has yet to find a use for.

Polk keeps a chronicle in which he records the party's deeds—usually spicing them up and re-editing them to make them closer to what he feels reality actually is. His prose is *far* beyond "purple"—"fantasy-genre paisley" is probably a better term. He loves using terms like "thews," "fey," and "rede". Life as a badger has started to suit Polk rather well. He is now convinced that his new form gives him wilderness lore skills that he can use to tell rangers a thing or two.

He is firm friends with Enid, Henry, and Escalla.

Polk can be used to give a DM a bit of fun, prodding characters toward danger. Polk can actually be extremely useful. He grumbles and fusses, but he takes care of his people when it counts. He also keeps useful bits of equipment horded in the portable hole. He sees himself as the coach of the party and never volunteers to take point (that job is for the hero), but sometimes he decides that leading by example is the only way to get things done. D

POLK

Male Badger, 4th-level Expert

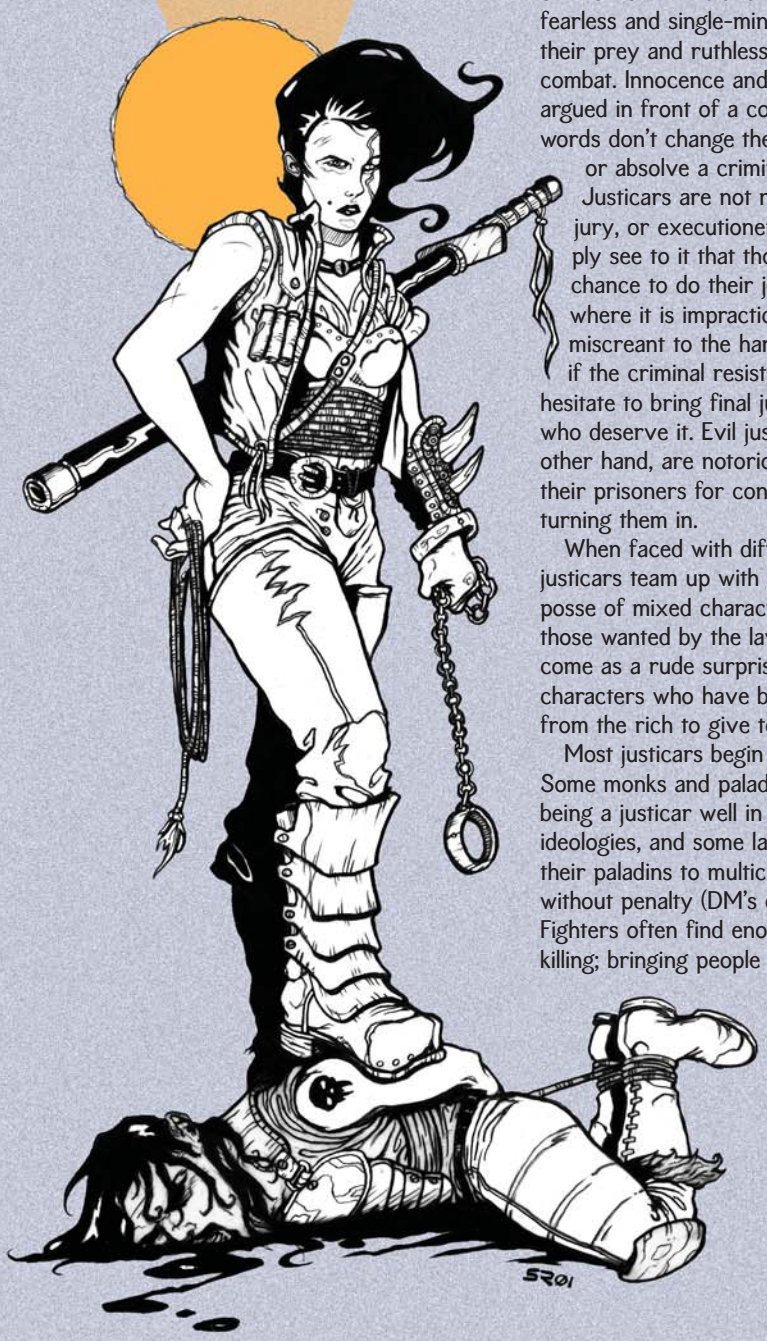
Strength	10	(+0)	Fort. Save	+4		Armor Class	13
Dexterity	13	(+1)	Ref. Save	+2		Flat-footed AC	12
Constitution	16	(+3)	Will Save	+3		Touch AC	11
Intelligence	10	(+0)	Alignment	NG			
Wisdom	8	(-1)	Speed	30, burrow 10			
Charisma	12	(+1)	Size	T			
Hit Points	36		Melee Attack	+3 (2 claws)			

Special: Proficient with all simple weapons and light armor.
Skills: Appraise +7, Bluff +8, Hide +13, Knowledge (local) +4, Knowledge (history) +4, Listen +3, Move Silently +5, Perform (ballad, buffoonery, epic, storytelling) +5, Profession (gambler) +1, Profession (teamster) +3, Search +2.
Feats: Dodge, Mobility, Run.
Languages: Common.
Possessions: Books of the voyages and adventures of the group.

The Justicar

by Edward Bolme

illustrated by Scott Roller



"Come as you are, come missing a leg, or come with your head on a pike, but you're coming with me."
—Wolfgang "The Wolf" Grimm

Where there are laws, there are those who defy them, and where citizens live in fear of these lawbreakers, brave souls hunt them down. These are the justicars. They don't do it for money; they don't do it for glory. They do it because it's a thankless job that needs to be done. It also happens to be a satisfying vocation to make a living by kicking the daylights out of a criminal who desperately needs it.

Justicars are generally solitary, relying on their own wits and skills. They are fearless and single-minded in pursuit of their prey and ruthlessly effective in combat. Innocence and alibi can be argued in front of a court, but pretty words don't change the facts of the case or absolve a criminal of guilt.

Justicars are not necessarily judge, jury, or executioner; often they simply see to it that those people get the chance to do their jobs. In cases where it is impractical to bring the miscreant to the hands of the law, or if the criminal resists, justicars never hesitate to bring final justice to those who deserve it. Evil justicars, on the other hand, are notorious for torturing their prisoners for confessions before turning them in.

When faced with difficult challenges, justicars team up with each other or a posse of mixed characters to hunt those wanted by the law. This might come as a rude surprise to a group of characters who have been robbing from the rich to give to the poor. . . .

Most justicars begin as rangers. Some monks and paladins also find being a justicar well in line with their ideologies, and some lawful gods allow their paladins to multiclass as a justicar without penalty (DM's discretion). Fighters often find enough reward in killing; bringing people back alive is typically more effort than they consider worthwhile. Conversely, many clerics are too forgiving to be justicars; obvious exceptions include clerics of St. Cuthbert, as well as Hextor and certain other lawful evil gods. Rogues and bards, with their stealth-oriented skills, can be very effective in this class. Even the occasional druid, sorcerer, or wizard (especially diviners) enter the field, wielding spells as their weapons instead of steel.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A justicar is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, all types of armor, and all shields.

Bring 'Em Back Alive (Ex): Whenever a justicar attacks with a melee weapon, he can deal subdual damage with the weapon instead of normal damage with no penalty to the attack roll. Normally, attempting to deal subdual damage with a weapon in this way incurs a -4 penalty to the attack roll.

Subdual Strike (Ex): A 1st-level justicar can make subdual strikes. Any time the justicar uses the bring 'em back alive class ability and his target would be denied her Dexterity bonus to AC (whether she actually has a Dexterity bonus or not) or when the justicar flanks the target, the justicar's attack deals +1d6 points of subdual damage. This extra damage increases to +2d6 at 4th level, +3d6 at 7th level, and again to +4d6 at 10th level. Should the justicar score a

Class Requirements

To be a justicar, a character must meet all of the following criteria:
Alignment: Any lawful.
Base Attack Bonus: +6.
Feats: Track, Skill Focus (Gather Information).
Wilderness Lore: 5 ranks.
Gather Information: 5 ranks.
Search: 5 ranks.

Class Skills

The justicar's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Disguise (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Innuendo (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Intuit Direction (Wis), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Locks (Dex), Ride (Dex), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Use Rope (Dex), and Wilderness Lore (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Hit Die: d10
1	+1	+0	+0	+2	Bring 'em back alive, subdual strike +1d6	
2	+2	+0	+0	+3	Improved grapple, crippling strike	
3	+3	+1	+1	+3	Exotic Weapon Proficiency (manacles), street savvy +2	
4	+4	+1	+1	+4	Subdual strike +2d6	
5	+5	+1	+1	+4	Hog-tie	
6	+6	+2	+2	+5	Street savvy +4	
7	+7	+2	+2	+5	Subdual strike +3d6	
8	+8	+2	+2	+6	Improved hog-tie	
9	+9	+3	+3	+6	Street savvy +6	
10	+10	+3	+3	+7	Intuition, subdual strike +4d6	

critical hit with a subdual strike, this extra damage is not multiplied.

A justicar can only subdual strike a living creature with discernable anatomy—undead, constructs, oozes, plants, and incorporeal creatures lack vital areas to attack. Also, creatures immune to subdual damage are immune to subdual strike damage. The justicar must be able to see the target well enough to pick out a vital spot and must be able to reach a vital spot. The justicar cannot subdual strike a creature with concealment or when striking the limbs of a creature whose vitals are beyond his reach.

Improved Grapple (Ex): At 2nd level, a justicar automatically receives the feat Improved Grapple (from *Oriental Adventures*—see the sidebar), even if he does not have the prerequisites.

Crippling Strike (Ex): The justicar with this ability can subdual strike opponents with such precision that his blows weaken and hamper them. When the justicar damages an opponent with a subdual strike, that character also takes 1 point of temporary Strength damage. Ability points lost due to damage return on their own at the rate of 1 point per day for each damaged ability.

Exotic Weapon Proficiency (manacles): Intimately familiar with the capture of criminals, justicars have learned to do more with a pair of manacles than restrain a lawbreaker. A justicar can swing a pair of metal manacles in one hand as if they were a club without suffering a penalty for using an improvised weapon. Masterwork manacles can be wielded as a masterwork light flail.

Street savvy (Ex): The justicar gains a circumstance bonus on all Innuendo and Gather Information checks while in pursuit of a criminal. This bonus is initially +2 at 3rd level, but it increases to +4 at 6th level and to +6 at 9th level.

Hog-tie (Ex): When the justicar successfully pins an opponent while grappling, he can attempt to hog-tie the opponent. Treat this as an extra option for the justicar who has an opponent pinned (see the *Player's Handbook* page 137). The justicar must have a rope or chain in one hand to attempt this action.

When trying to hog-tie, make an opposed grapple check. The justicar can use his Use Rope skill instead of a normal grapple check. The opponent must make an opposed grapple check or Escape Artist check. If the justicar succeeds, the opponent is hog-tied. If the opponent succeeds, the hog-tie attack fails and the grapple continues.

If the justicar successfully hog-ties an opponent, that person is considered bound and helpless (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 84 for the helpless description). Note that the justicar receives the standard +10 bonus on Use Rope checks to bind someone, per the *Player's Handbook* page 76. Bound foes can make an Escape Artist check (opposed by the justicar's Use Rope check) or a Strength check (DC 23 for rope, DC 26 for chain) to break free. Bound characters can also cast spells that don't require somatic components and if they have the necessary material components already in hand.

The justicar can only use this ability on opponents within at least one size category larger than he is or smaller (thus, a halfling justicar can use hog-tie against Medium-size or smaller opponents). He can also only use it against humanoid-shaped creatures (thus, most Humanoids, Monstrous Humanoids, Outsiders, and Giants would qualify).

Improved Hog-tie (Ex): An 8th-level justicar can attempt a hog-tie without first pinning his opponent. Thus, whenever a grapple is established, the justicar can use an attack action to attempt to hog-tie his foe. Also, if the justicar has the Quick Draw feat, he does not need to be holding the rope or chain in his hand.

Intuition (Su): When hunting a specific person, a 10th-level justicar can use the Intuit Direction skill to determine in which direction the culprit might be found if the criminal is within one mile of the justicar. Similarly, the justicar can use this ability to determine the direction of anyone he has previously faced in combat if she is within the same range. D

Improved Grapple [General]

You are skilled in martial arts that emphasize holds and throws.

Prerequisite: Improved Unarmed Strike

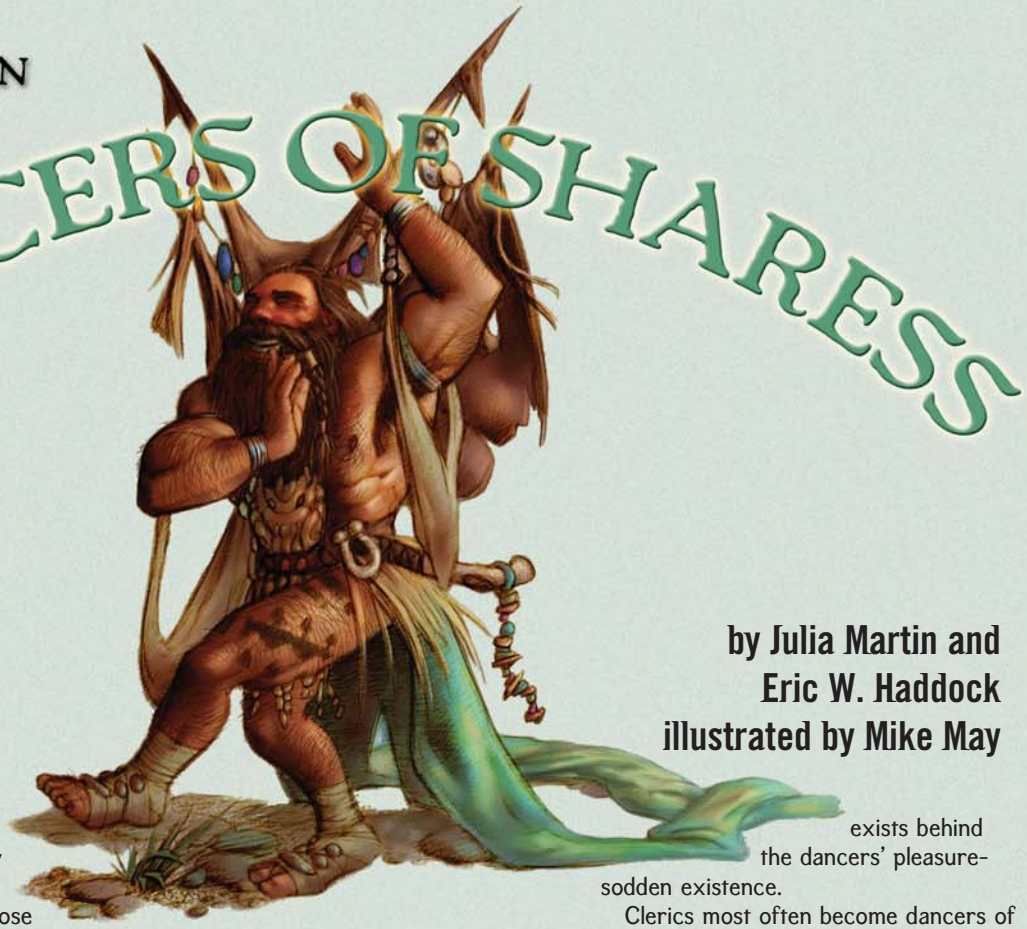
Benefit: If you hit with an unarmed strike, you deal normal damage and can attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. No initial touch attack is required. You can deal normal damage while grappling, rather than subdual damage, without suffering a penalty on your grapple check.

Normal: Characters without this feat make a melee touch attack to grab their opponent and provoke an attack of opportunity when doing so. They also suffer a -4 penalty on their grapple checks when trying to inflict normal damage in a grapple.

FAITHS OF FAERUN

SHARESS:

DANCERS OF SHARESS



Double Your Pleasure

by Julia Martin and Eric W. Haddock
illustrated by Mike May

Dancers of Sharess seek pleasure at every opportunity and live life as one endless revel. They value being footloose and fancy free and resist restrictions of any kind—cultural, emotional, mental, or physical—placed on them by others. They love to dance, and most are accomplished singers and play one or more musical instruments. Dancers find evil ugly and repugnant, and they hate undead, viewing them as a violation of the dead's peaceful rest and an offense against the vibrancy of the positive energy of life.

But dancers of Sharess also draw from an eclectic set of mandates and traditions passed down through the evolution of their goddess and her church. Their hatred of Set comes from their goddess's ancient history as Bast, of Vhaeraun from her merger with Zandilar, and of Shar from her captivity by that deity in her recent past as Sharess. Their affiliation with felines also grows from their goddess's history as Bast, who subsumed Felidae, and their accomplishments in dance from Zandilar the Dancer. Bast also lends them a tradition of fighting skills that few realize exists behind the dancers' pleasure-sodden existence.

Clerics most often become dancers of Sharess, with druids and rangers being less common choices. Sharess's philosophy so chafes under restriction that it cannot accommodate the lawful nature of paladins and monks.

Class Features

All of the following are features of the dancer of Sharess prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Dancers of Sharess are proficient with all simple weapons. They gain no new proficiency with armor or shields.

DANCER OF SHARESS

Levels	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Hit Die: d6 Spells per Day
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Cat familiar, cat sight	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+2	+0	+2	Grace of the goddess	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+1	+3	+1	+3	Familiar shapechange (cheetah, leopard, lion)	+1 level of existing class
4th	+2	+4	+1	+4	1st favored enemy, tongue of the diplomat	+1 level of existing class
5th	+2	+4	+1	+4	Touch of Sharess (unarmed)	+1 level of existing class
6th	+3	+5	+2	+5	Familiar shapechange (tiger, dire lion)	+1 level of existing class
7th	+3	+5	+2	+5	Wiles of the pleasure queen	+1 level of existing class
8th	+4	+6	+2	+6	Dance of Zandilar	+1 level of existing class
9th	+4	+6	+3	+6	2nd favored enemy, familiar shapechange (dire tiger)	+1 level of existing class
10th	+5	+7	+3	+7	Improved touch of Sharess	+1 level of existing class

CLASS SKILLS

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

The dancer of Sharess's class skills (organized by key ability) are:

STR	Jump, Climb	INT	Knowledge (religion), Spellcraft
DEX	Balance, Move Silently	WIS	Heal, Spot
CON	Concentration	CHA	Diplomacy, Perform

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a dancer of Sharess, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

Patron Deity:	Sharess.
Alignment:	Chaotic good.
Base Attack Bonus:	+3.
Spellcasting:	Able to cast 3rd-level divine spells; clerics who are dancers of Sharess must select the Charm domain as one of their domains.
Perform:	4 ranks, and Perform (dancing) as one of the selected forms of performance.
Knowledge (religion):	9 ranks.

Cat Familiar: Upon gaining her 1st level as a dancer of Sharess, a dancer of Sharess gains a cat familiar. This familiar does not require a day of effort or the expenditure of magical materials costing 100 gp (it chooses the dancer of Sharess by Sharess's grace), but in other ways the familiar is identical to the familiars that sorcerers and wizards can obtain.

Calculate the familiar's special abilities based on the table on page 51 in the *Player's Handbook* using the dancer of Sharess's character level (as opposed to her class level).

Cat Sight (Ex): Dancers of Sharess gain low-light vision at 1st level.

Grace of the Goddess (Su): Dancers of Sharess have a portion of the catlike grace and flexibility of their goddess, along with a measure of her force of personality. They gain a +2 bonus to all Dexterity and Charisma checks and Dexterity-based and Charisma-based skill checks, and a +1 bonus to Reflex saving throws.

Familiar Shapechange (Su): When a dancer of Sharess reaches 3rd level, her cat familiar can, as a standard action once per day, shapechange into a cheetah, leopard, or lion. At 6th level, her familiar adds the forms of a tiger or dire lion to the repertoire for this ability and can shapechange twice per day. At 9th, her familiar adds the form of a dire tiger to its repertoire and can shapechange three times per day.

This ability functions as the *shapechange* spell cast by a spellcaster of the dancer of Sharess's character level. Thus, the familiar can remain *shapechanged* no more than 10 minutes/class level per day of the dancer of Sharess. The amount of time spent *shapechanged* need not be continuous. (In other words, the familiar of a 3rd-level dancer of Sharess could be a cheetah for 1 minute, then return to being a cat, then be a lion for 4 minutes, then return to being a cat, and so on, up to a total of 30 minutes in shapechanged forms in one day).

Favored Enemy (Church of Shar, Vhaeraun, or Set): The dancer of Sharess gains a +1 bonus to Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, and Wilderness Lore checks when using these skills against agents of one of the listed churches (pick one). Likewise, she gets the same bonus to weapon damage rolls against agents of the chosen deity. A dancer of Sharess also gets the damage bonus with ranged weapons, but only against targets within 30 feet. The bonus doesn't apply to damage against creatures that are immune to critical hits. At 9th level, the bonus associated with this ability goes up to +2 for the first enemy, and the dancer of Sharess gains a new favored enemy bonus of +1 for agents of one of the churches not selected at 4th level. (This bonus works the same as for rangers in the FORGOTTEN REALMS that select an organization as a favored enemy, with the organization in this case being one of the respective churches.)

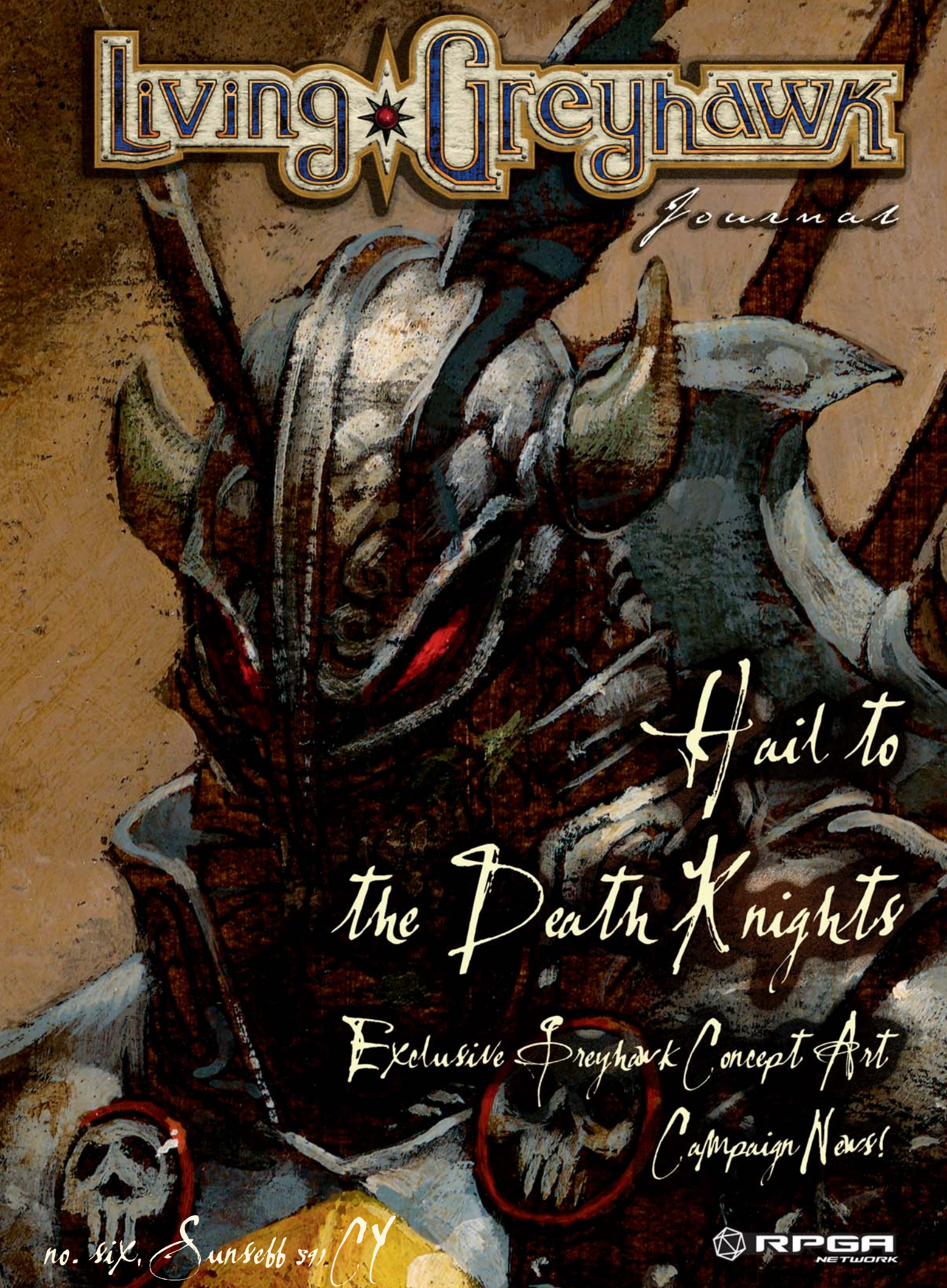
Tongue of the Diplomat (Ex): The dancer of Sharess has had ample experience persuading people to do as she wishes and has learned exactly what to say and do to wrap someone around her finger. She gains a +4 competence bonus to Diplomacy checks.

Touch of Sharess (Su): A dancer of Sharess has the ability to stun a creature she touches with an unarmed caress (melee touch attack that requires a free hand) by supernaturally overloading its perceptions of pleasure. She does not provoke attacks of opportunity from armed opponents when she uses this ability. The dancer of Sharess can use this ability once per round, but no more than once per two dancer of Sharess levels per day. The dancer of Sharess must declare she is using the touch of Sharess before making the touch attack (thus, a missed attack roll ruins the attempt). A foe touched by the dancer of Sharess is forced to make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + the dancer of Sharess's character level + her Charisma modifier). If the saving throw fails, the opponent is stunned for 1 round (see page 85 in the *DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE* for a description of the stunned condition). Constructs, oozes, plants, undead, incorporeal creatures, and creatures immune to critical hits cannot be affected by the touch of Sharess.

At 10th level, the ability becomes even more potent. The duration of the stun effect lasts for 1d4+1 rounds if the target fails his Fortitude saving throw.

Wiles of the Pleasure Queen (Su): Dancers of Sharess are both supernaturally charming and difficult to charm. Add +2 to the Difficulty Class for all saving throws against spells from the Enchantment school they cast. They also get a +2 bonus to caster level checks (1d20 + caster level) to beat a creature's spell resistance for an Enchantment school spell they are casting, a +2 bonus to dispel checks to counter Enchantment spells, and a +2 bonus to their saving throws against spells from the Enchantment school.

Dance of Zandilar (Su): A dancer of Sharess can use dance to substitute for the verbal component of a spell of the Enchantment school. The dancer of Sharess must succeed at a Perform (dancing) check (DC 15 + spell level); if she does, it is cast as if she had prepared it with the Silent Spell feat. However, the spell does not use up a spell slot one level higher than the spell's regular level as is normal for a silent spell. If the check fails, the spell fails and is ruined.


Living Greyhawk
Journal
Hail to the Death Knights
Exclusive Greyhawk Concept Art
Campaign News!
no. six, Sunsebb 591 CY
RPGA NETWORK

Campaign News

What is Living Greyhawk?

LIVING GREYHAWK is the largest, most popular shared-world DUNGEONS & DRAGONS campaign in the history of gaming. Run under the auspices of the ROLE PLAYING GAMER ASSOCIATION Network (RPGA), the campaign offers gamers around the world the chance to contribute to the developing history of Oerth by taking part in scenarios played at conventions, game days, or in the comfort of home. For more information on how you can get involved in the campaign, visit **www.livinggreyhawk.com**.

Seven is the Number

Like any dark cabal worth its weight in evil, the LIVING GREYHAWK Circle of Six directorate has grown in power and number, increasing its ranks to seven. This malefic organization was proud to indoctrinate former Veluna Triad hammer of pain and suffering David Christ, RPGA U.K. lead torturer Sean Connor, and the Rocky Mountain's cunning madman Tim White into its ranks in the early days of autumn.

"This trio of malcontent schemers will help us accomplish our ultimate goal: snuffing out the light of heroism and do-goodery that currently plagues the Flanaess," campaign director of evil Stephen Radney-MacFarland chuckled when he unleashed the news at a small unsuspecting game day held in an undisclosed location. When asked how the Circle expected to accomplish this foul goal he cryptically responded, "one monster, one trap, one cursed item at a time."

Other sources within the Circle were more forthcoming about the specific duties and goals of the three new members. One Circle member who wanted to be known as "Cheryl Llewellyn" divulged that Christ would be in charge of propaganda and Conner strategy master of the European front. White was dubbed with the horrific title of rules lawyer.

The response of other Circle members, Belgian mistress of painful distress Ann Van Dam and House Brendingund puppet master John Richardson, was to giggle evilly and poke this reporter with sharp, pointy sticks.

WHERE'S ISSUE 5?

We hope you're enjoying the new format of the *LIVING GREYHAWK Journal* here in the pages of *DRAGON Magazine*. Longtime subscribers are probably wondering why this is issue #6, since the last issue to go to subscribers was #4, way back in June. To make a long story short, our 5th issue got caught up in the transition, and will be on its way to everyone who was a GUILD-LEVEL RPGA member in August within a couple weeks of this issue's release. Strange? Perhaps. We prefer to look at it is Ralishaz-tinged.

No More Tiers

The LIVING GREYHAWK campaign has moved away from the old Tier system, and is now using Average Party Level to determine the level of challenge in each adventure. If you are using a 591 CY scenario (campaign year 1) that uses the old Tiers, assume that the Tier multiplied by 2 is the APL suitable for that encounter. To determine the APL of a group of PCs, complete the following steps:

1) Determine the character level for each PC participating in the adventure.

2) If PCs bring animals that have been trained for combat (most likely war horses or dogs trained for war), other than those brought by virtue of a class ability (i.e., animal companions, familiars, paladin mounts, etc.) use the following chart to determine the number of levels you add to the sum above. Add each character's animals separately. A single PC may only bring four or fewer animals of this type, and animals with different CRs are added separately.

Animal CR	Number of Animals			
	1	2	3	4
1/4 and 1/6	0	0	0	1
1/3 and 1/2	0	0	1	1
1	1	1	2	3
2	2	3	4	5
3	3	4	5	6
4	4	5	6	7

Sum the results of 1 and 2, and divide by the number of characters playing in the adventure—round up. If you are running a table of six PCs, add one to that average.

In LIVING GREYHAWK adventures, APLs categorize the level of challenge the PCs will face. APLs are given in even-numbered increments. If the APL of your group falls on an odd number, the judge will ask you whether you would like to play a harder or easier adventure before play begins. Based on your choice, the judge will use either the higher or the lower adjacent APL.

APL also affects the amount of experience you can gain at the end of an adventure. If your character is three character levels or more either higher or lower than the APL at which the adventure is played, that character will receive only half of the experience points awarded for the adventure. This simulates the fact that either your character was not as challenged as normal, or relied on help by higher-level characters to reach the scenario's objectives.

Note: LIVING GREYHAWK adventures are designed for APL 2 and higher. Three or four, or sometimes even five 1st-level characters may find difficulty with the challenges in a LIVING GREYHAWK adventure. If your group is APL 1 there are three things that you can do to help even the score.

1) Attempt to create a table of six 1st-level characters, or try to enlist higher-level characters to play at that table.

2) Advise characters to buy riding dogs to help protect and fight for them. All riding dogs are considered trained to attack. PCs who want their dog to attack

must succeed at a Handle Animal or Charisma check (DC 10). Failure indicates that the animal does not attack that round. This is a free action (spoken command) that may be attempted each round. If an animal loses half or more hit points in a single round it flees, unless another check is successful.

3) A group of APL 1 adventurers who desire an extra hand can "enlist an iconic." The stats for the 1st-level versions of Tordek, Mialee, Lidda, and Jozan are given at the end of each adventure. The group may pick one of these characters to join them on this adventure. The DM controls that NPC.

Party Like it's 592 CY!

After a year and a half of LIVING GREYHAWK fun, it's almost time to reset your calendars and, more importantly, replenish your Time Units (back up to 52 for the year as of January 1st)! And to give you yet another reason to stay up and party on New Years, this year we will be hosting the First Annual First LIVING GREYHAWK Table of the Year Contest. The great thing about this contest is that everyone who participates wins. This is what you have to do:

- Order an event for January 1, 2002. That event should feature at least one LIVING GREYHAWK scenario.
- Start that game right at midnight; snap a picture of your game table with some kind of proof that it is midnight. What kind of proof? Be creative!
- Complete your score packet online, and email us at lgnewyear@home.com with the name and RPGA numbers of the participants of the game, along with a scan of the photo (jpeg format, 72-100 dpi please), and a key to let us know who's who in the photograph. Both must be done before midnight Pacific Standard time January 5, 2002.

Each player (and the DM) at each table that participates will be awarded campaign documentation granting them an additional 3 Time Units for one of their characters that may be spent during the 592 CY game year. We'll pick the three coolest pictures and award members of those groups (including the judge!) a grand prize of 5 additional Time Units for the year. For purposes of the contest, "cool" is a very subjective term—it could be that the photo made us laugh out loud, or it could make us wish we were playing in that game. We'll post the winning photos on the LIVING GREYHAWK website, so for Pelor's sake keep them clean!

The Plight of Tristor

Contrary to popular belief, we are not trying to play on the nostalgia of old cereal box mail-in offers with the long delay of *The Fright at Tristor* results. This LIVING GREYHAWK play-at-home adventure has been (thus far) an outstanding success on the play side (over 200 tables of results; about 1,000 members have participated thus far), but fulfillment of magic item goodies is agonizingly slow. But, chin up, everyone. We are again on the verge of a big *Tristor* push, as most of the results that are currently at RPGA HQ should be out in the mail by the time you read this. For those of you who are still procrastinating, you don't have long. *The Fright at Tristor* results will only be taken if postmarked on or before December 31, 2001.

New Scenarios Now Available!

A host of new LIVING GREYHAWK adventures have just hit the official campaign website (www.livinggreyhawk.com). Click on the "game play" link in the sidebar and order up a little slice of evil to challenge your heroes!

(COR1-08) The Future's Bright

By Creighton Broadhurst

Shipwrecked on the Bright Desert coast, you locate the remains of another shipwreck that can be used to repair your own craft. Unfortunately, the ship's crew seems to have died in a strange fashion that might come back to haunt you. A Core adventure for characters level 1-6.

(COR1-09) Swamp Things!

By Bruce Paris

Dark slithering denizens of muck and despair threaten a once peaceful druid's grove now in the midst of its own political upheaval. A Core adventure for characters level 1-6.

This unsavory interloper hides in one of the newly released adventures. Find out which by playing them all!

(ADP1-10) An Evil Morning

Merchants have gone missing at an alarming rate. Rumors abound of vampires and devils; others say that a murderous minion of Ivid V or Iuz is trying to make a name for itself by squeezing the life-blood from the city. Will adventurers succeed where city authorities seem only to bumble? An Adaptable adventure for characters level 3-8.

(ADP1-11) Funeral for a Friend

The city mourns the passing of one of its greatest benefactors, but the body turns up missing before it can be laid to rest! Can you and a handful of friends find out what is going on? An Adaptable adventure for characters level 1-6.

The Death Knights of

Part One • By Gary Holian • Death Knight Template by Rich Redman

Illustrations by Greg Staples and Jeff Miracola

"With tongues afire and breath of smoke,
the wrath of heaven their vengeance did stoke..."
– From the Ballads of Swydesin of the Cranes

Countless evils have stalked the WORLD OF GREYHAWK, but few are as dire as the dreaded death knights. Formed in a crucible of betrayal and damnation, these fell beings roam the lands of men, cursing everything they touch. Walking warriors of bone and desiccated flesh enlivened by a fiery spirit and unyielding hatred, death knights represent some of the most powerful and destructive champions that the armies of evil have ever marshaled against the forces of good and light in the Flanaess. Fortunately, their numbers are few and their enemies many. This article recounts the fell history of those who would become the death knights and presents a new template you can use to generate death knights for your own campaign. Next issue, we'll take a look at specific death knights and how they can be used as villains to enliven (and perhaps destroy) your campaign.

Origin of the Death Knights

The sleeping crown rouses to
an apostate,
Eyes succumb to the beauty of the
beast.
And thirteen moons circle the dreaded
master,
As the sun sets on the great
empire.

–12nd Quatrain,
The Lays of Bar Stannich

Centuries ago, the Great Kingdom of Aerdy enjoyed a level of peace and prosperity previously unknown to the Flanaess. From the Solnor shores to the Fals Gap, across the entire breadth of their empire, Aerdi culture and commerce ruled the day. In 198 CY, the sage Selvor the Younger proclaimed a coming time of strife and living death, but few in power wanted to hear such words during an unprecedented period of contentment. A creeping decadence was everywhere in evidence to thosewilling to peel back the veil and recognize it. However, few could have guessed that the seeds of centuries of darkness and destruction were even then being planted at the kingdom's core by those most entrusted to safeguard it.

The Knight Protectors of the Great Kingdom is widely regarded as the greatest order of knighthood in the history of the Flanaess. While their current incarnation is but a shadow of its former self, the knights were first christened by the kings of Aerdy centuries before the kingdom achieved its swell. Over the years, the Knight Protectors became the most preeminent defenders of the common weal in all Aerdy. Regardless of god or creed, all knights proudly shared this burden. As a congregation of the kingdom's best and bravest warriors, the Knight Protectors and their exploits became the stuff of fable and legend. The defeat of barbarian hordes, rampaging dragons, and the schemes of power-mad sorcerers became woven into their history along with the legends of heroes such as Sir Lasimon the Martyr, Prince Jophan of Ahlissa, Caldni Vir of the Shamblefield, and Sir Piqarn the Hammer.

By the autumn of 202 CY, during the reign of the Overking Jiranen, a vacancy emerged at the head of the illustrious knighthood following the death of the well-respected Knight Commander of the order, Lord Nidramon the Hextorian. Most Aerdi expected the Council Gallant, composed of the oldest and wisest knights in the kingdom, to choose the man widely regarded as the greatest knight of the day to succeed the office. This was Lord Kargoth of Mansbridge, a Torquann nobleman who cut a stunning figure in the imaginations of the Aerdi people and nobility. A paladin of Heironeous, accounts say he stood nearly seven feet tall and had the strength of a hill giant. His exploits were already countless and while no longer in his prime, none could deny his unmatched puissance. But time eventually claims all men, even the matchless Lord Kargoth, so the paladin viewed becoming the standard bearer of the Knight Protectors as a last opportunity to extend his glorious career and share in the power regularly entrusted to lesser worthies.

An eclectic faction had gathered around his banner, a band of fawning princelings, cronies, schemers, and other assorted ne'er-do-wells. They fully expected his elevation to the head of

Berth

the order and began whispering to him that it was all but assured. When the Council Gallant announced Benedor Monlath of Chathold as the next Knight Commander of the order, shock spread throughout the land. The council proclaimed young Benedor the best living embodiment of the tenets of the Knight Protectors; some even suggested that he was touched by the spirit of the goddess Johydee.

When word of the decision reached Lord Kargoth at his castle, Fharlanst, the mighty knight seethed. His proponents had assured him of the selection and he had become convinced that no one was more worthy. The apparent slight wounded him deeply. When a priest of Heironeous counseled against challenging the council's decision, Kargoth had him expelled from his castle.

Goaded by his supporters, Kargoth appeared in the capital the following month for the convocation of investiture held in the Court of Essences at the royal palace. There, before the Overking and assembled nobles of the celestial houses of the land, he challenged Sir Benedor to a contest of arms. The younger knight accepted the challenge, as honor required, despite the disquiet quickly spreading throughout the chamber. Though clearly weaker than Kargoth, the valiant young knight repeatedly parried his attacks successfully, refusing to give up the floor. The two battled to a stalemate until sunset fell upon the chamber, marking the end of the contest. Kargoth's humiliation was complete: according to the rules of Parslin, the code of the Knight Protectors, Lord Kargoth had been defeated as he had issued the challenge but failed to prevail in the allotted time.

Sir Benedor reached out a hand of truce and friendship, as was the custom of the order. But Sir Kargoth could not hide his disgust, not in that special chamber created by the sorcery of the legendary Court Mage Schandor, which

bade men to the speak the truth in all things. Knights of all stripes called foul, while Kargoth's faction sneered. In his agony and shame, the great knight rode off, wandering the countryside for many days. He damned the fate that had brought him low and vowed somehow to exact a vengeance. His mood festered and he openly cursed Heironeous for his plight. The heavens looked down upon him in silence. Demoralized, Kargoth soon became lost in a rainstorm while riding up the coast back to Fharlanst. Within a day of his home, he stumbled upon a lost ruin, in which he took refuge. There, the paladin discovered a rubble-strewn stairway leading down into the darkness. Following it, he came upon a vast hypogeum located beneath the earth. An ancient shrine greeted the light of his torch in this crypt-like chamber, at the center of which stood a grotesque statue of singularly obscene beauty. Kargoth was transfixed.

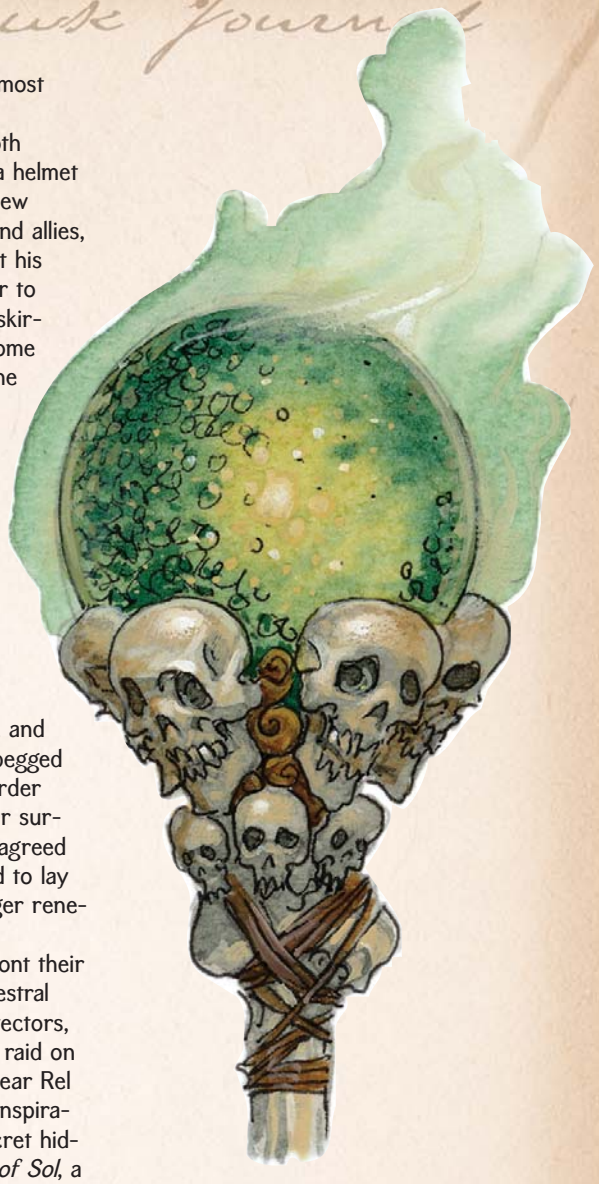
A chattering began to buzz in his ears as a voice spoke to him from out of the din. It seemed to emanate from the monstrous icon, which the paladin immediately recognized as that of a prince of the Abyss. The ancient Aerdi called this demon *Ahmon-Ibor,* The Sibilant Beast, a fiend known more commonly as Demogorgon in modern vernacular. Kargoth knew his cult was widespread among the decadent Flan natives of the northeastern coast who practiced dark rites and human sacrifice and had been prevalent in the central lands before the native Flan there had been pacified generations ago.

The Beast praised Kargoth's might and heralded his exploits. Before morning, it had completely seduced him, making promises of power and vengeance, filling the gaping hole in his wounded pride. The Beast bade Kargoth to prove his fealty in exchange for the awesome powers that would be his to command. Kargoth and Demogorgon swore a pact that must be sealed in blood. The fiend's request surprised the paladin, but the twisted nature of the plan brought a smile to his face. Kargoth marked his words carefully, pledging himself completely to the dire path that lay before him. And then, with the suddenness of a thunderstroke, tentacles emerged from the darkness and tore out his eyes. In a single moment dominated by what seemed like a year of pain and torture, Lord Kargoth became the first, most powerful death knight of Oerth.

The following morning, Kargoth returned to Fharlanst, donning a helmet to mask his disfigurement and new form. His assembled servitors and allies, though somewhat taken aback at his menacing demeanor, were eager to speak with him. An internecine skirmish had broken out between some of the Knight Protectors over the ascendance of Benedor, whom some considered weak and unworthy. Other longtime grudges, having little to do with Kargoth, came to the fore, and many knights overtly ignored the tenets of Parslin in their haste to gain revenge for past slights. Some spoke openly against the Overking. Turmoil had begun to spread throughout the kingdom, and some of the grumbling knights begged Kargoth to lead a coup of the order with their support. Much to their surprise, the behelmed lord knight agreed to do so. The plan he proceeded to lay out perplexed them, but the eager renegades listened on.

Instead of riding out to confront their rivals at Morshaldin Castle, ancestral headquarters of the Knight Protectors, Lord Kargoth's plan called for a raid on the obscure Temple of Lothan near Rel Deven. Kargoth informed his conspirators that the temple was the secret hiding place of the legendary *Orb of Sol*, a holy artifact of great symbolic importance to the Aerdi people. Its theft, he argued, would force their opponents into the open, where they could be crushed on the field of battle thanks to the *Orb's* legendary powers. Kargoth ultimately convinced thirteen of his fellow knights to place their trust in him and take up his plan. Though few of them truly understood its dire intentions, they agreed to support him and rode for Rel Deven the following dawn.

The hell-bent troop made quick work of the guardians of the temple and easily pierced its inner sanctum, the secret resting place of the *Orb*. Kargoth worked according to his own plan, however, and he bade everyone to stand aside as he approached the *Orb* himself and studied its rune-covered surface. The other knights displayed open apprehension. The culmination of the pact Kargoth had made with his new dark



***Demogorgon's Bilious Sphere*, an obscene parody of the *Orb of Sol* now carried by Kargoth the death knight.**

master was at hand. The other traitors were no longer of any concern to him. The Beast had taught him ancient words of power, maledictions so profane they could bend the rumored powers of the *Orb* to his will and cause it to open a crack between this world and Demogorgon's personal layer of the Abyss. Without further warning, Kargoth traced the surface of the *Orb* with his fingers and spoke the words of power. Smoke rose from his digits as a crackling nimbus sent the dark knight hurtling to the walls of the chamber. An earthquake rocked the Temple of Lothan, and the floors and walls began to crack. Great tongues of unearthly fire began to shoot out from the *Orb* in all directions. The other knights began to

Great tongues of unearthly fire began to shoot out from the Orb in all directions. The other knights were struck down where they stood by the relentless flames.

run for their lives, but they were quickly and unmercifully struck down where they stood by the relentless flames. Their flesh caught fire as they collapsed onto buckling flagstones.

Lord Kargoth writhed on the floor in agony, but he had succeeded in his task. He had delivered up the traitors to his master, and he had unleashed a horror upon the world, a great demon beast named Arendagrost, Maw of the Abyss. According to accounts at the time, the beast vaguely resembled an immense wingless dragon of gargantuan size. Instead of legs, it moved upon a sea of tentacles. In place of scales, it was covered in coarse black fur and had three heads that resembled monstrous horned fiends that breathed bloody acid, fire, and frost. Its six-fold eyes offered instant death to anyone catching their hideous gaze. The monstrous fiend began to cut a swath of destruction from the outskirts of Rel Deven on a direct path to Rauxes. As reports reached the other Knight Protectors, they mobilized in the defense of the kingdom. Sir Benedor, new commander of the order, had been en route back to Chathold, but quickly rode for Rel Deven upon hearing the terrible news. He arrived to discover the Temple of Lothan a smoking ruin. What he found in the Chamber of the Orb shocked him to the core of his being.

The smoking bodies of thirteen Knight Protectors were strewn about the inner sanctum, which now resembled a charnel house. Their eyes had been cut from their faces, and Kargoth was nowhere to be found. Sir Benedor immediately suspected dark sorcery and moved quickly to examine the *Orb* in the center of the room. The young knight barely glanced at its rune-covered surface before the chamber began to stir. A sudden coldness tore at his skin. One by one, the smoking, scorched bodies of the dead knights around him began to rise to their feet and fix their gaze upon him. Their armor and clothing were seared to their charred flesh. A preternatural glow emerged from their faces, where once had been eyes. Sir Benedor recognized instantly that these were no longer men, but fiends. These were the dreaded death knights, newly sired into the world.

Aftermath

The rest of the history is well known, as the remaining Knight Protectors united to first waylay, then destroy the demonic abomination heading for Rauxes. However, this victory came too late to save some of the royal family, which was decimated near Carnifand. The attack cost many additional lives along the path of destruction, and a wave of terror gripped the kingdom as word quickly spread throughout the land of Kargoth's betrayal. As his infamy spread throughout the kingdom, the other Death Knights escaped the ruins of the Temple of Lothan and scattered throughout the lands under the cover of this confusion. They cursed the gods and Lord Kargoth for drawing them into the same dark pact he made with the Beast. The cult of *Ahmon-Ibor* began to rise in the eastern cities, gaining a foothold in the Great Kingdom once more. Sir Benedor, now bearer of the *Orb of Sol*, launched his quest to bring the traitors to justice and dedicated the order to this mission. But there would be few victories in his dauntless struggle, as passions soon faded and decadence gained a handhold among the Aerdi. In 213 CY, the Royal Astrologers at Rel Astra confirmed a coming Age of Great Sorrow. The new Overking Zelcor distanced himself from the Knight Protectors. The attention of the Great Kingdom was drawn progressively inward as provinces began to win their independence, decade after decade. A century later, the death knights were so powerful it was they who began hunting down the Knight Protectors. Few came to their aid, as the monstrous knights gained the upper hand. Kargoth's depredations were so great that his infamy spread far and wide. The Great Kingdom, once a beacon of order and justice in the Flanaess, was never again the same.

New Template: Death Knight

Though Kargoth's betrayal and Demogorgon's meddling created only a handful of death knights hundreds of years ago, there's no reason why powers such as Nerull, Kyuss, Orcus, or Demogorgon himself can't create more to add to Oerth's small compliment.

Martial champions of evil consumed by hatred for the living and all things good, death knights are most commonly raised from the ranks of blackguards, fighters, rangers, and barbarians. Paladins who fall from grace near the moment of their death might also become death knights. Paladins who become death knights are subject to the same modifications presented for the blackguard in Chapter 2: Characters of the DUNGEON MASTER's Guide.

A death knight's physical form is that of its decayed body, now undead. Its leathery, skeletal flesh is burned as if by infernal fire, as are its lips, teeth, and tongue. Visible plumes of steam accompany every breath. Death knights speak with booming, deep basso voices. Where once were eyes rest empty sockets illuminated by pinpricks of intense light.

Death knights commonly wear ancient, decaying suits of armor accented by flowing capes to mark them as figures of importance and accentuate their menace. Most wear blackened helms topped with heraldic devices related to their station in life. All possess a bellicose and arrogant per-

sonality informed by perverse codes of honor that brook little mercy on the living.

Death knights speak the languages they knew in life.

Creating a Death Knight

"Death knight" is a template that can be added to any humanoid creature (referred to hereafter as "character"). The character's type changes to "undead." It uses all the character's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Hit Dice: Increase to d12.

Speed: Same as the character.

AC: The death knight has a +5 natural armor, or the character's natural armor, whichever is better.

Damage: All successful melee or natural weapon attacks cause 1 point of Constitution damage. Death knights usually fight with martial weapons, but if disarmed they use a touch attack that uses negative energy to deal 1d8+5 points of damage to living creatures. A Will save with a DC of 10 + 1/2 the death knight's HD + the death knight's Charisma modifier reduces the damage by half and negates Constitution damage. Characters with natural attacks can use their natural weaponry or use the touch attack, as they prefer.

Special Attacks: A death knight retains all the character's special attacks and gains those listed below. Saves have a DC of 10 + 1/2 the death knight's HD + death knight's Charisma modifier unless noted otherwise.

Abyssal Blast (Su): Once per day, a death knight can unleash an abyssal blast of hellish fire. The blast explodes in a 20-ft.-radius spread anywhere within a range of 400 ft. + 40 ft./HD. The fire inflicts 1d6 points of damage per HD of the death knight (maximum 20d6). Half of the damage is fire damage, but the rest results directly from divine power and is therefore not subject to being reduced by *protection from elements (fire), fire shield (chill shield),* and similar magic. A successful Reflex save negates half the total damage.

Fear Aura (Su): Death knights are shrouded in a dreadful aura of death and evil. Creatures of less than 5 HD within a 15-foot radius must succeed at a Will save or be affected as though by the *fear* spell as cast by a sorcerer of the death knight's level.

Undead Followers: Death knights attract lesser undead creatures that happen to exist within a 200 mile radius. They may have up to twice their own level in Hit Dice of followers. The followers arrive monthly in the following increments: 1d6 ghouls, 1d4 ghasts, 1d12 Medium-size skeletons, 1d4 wights, or 1d8 Medium-size zombies once per week. These creatures remain in the service of the death knight until destroyed.

Spells: The death knight can cast any spells it could while alive, unless alignment restrictions prohibit it.

Special Qualities: The death knight retains all the character's special qualities and those listed below.

Damage Reduction (Su): A death knight's undead body is tough, giving the creature damage reduction 15/+1.

Immunities (Ex): Death Knights are immune to cold, electricity, fire, and polymorphing affects in addition to immunities granted to all undead.

Spell Resistance (Su): Each death knight gains SR 20 +1 per character's level beyond level 10.

Summon Mount (Su): New death knights have the ability to summon a mount, typically a nightmare, though it may be of any other species normally used as a mount. The mount can have no more Hit Dice than half the death knight's levels. If the mount is lost or killed, the death knight may summon another after a year and a day.

Turn Immunity (Ex): A death knight cannot be turned. They can be dispelled with *holy word,* however.

Saves: Same as character.

Abilities: A death knight gains +4 to Strength and +2 to Wisdom and Charisma; but being undead, has no Constitution score.

Skills: Same as character.

Feats: Same as character.

Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground.

Organization: Solitary or Troupe (See *undead followers*, above.)

Challenge Rating: Same as character +3

Treasure: Double standard coins, goods, and items.

Alignment: Same as character (always evil).

Advancement: Same as the base creature.

Death Knight Characters

In order for a character to be considered for transformation to a death knight, all abilities must be above 10. The character must also be at least 6th level. All characters who become death knights are subject to the following changes in their normal abilities: *cure* abilities may not be used, but they can use equivalent *cause wounds* abilities. *Animal empathy* works only on animals of non-good alignments.

Window on the World

In 1998, artist Sam Wood sat down to sketch out the look and feel of the new World of Greyhawk. *No one outside Wizards of the Coast has ever seen those drawings.*

Until now.

Here's a key to the illustrations and some words from the artist.

1) Ehlonna (Human Avatar). "I wanted her to be feminine and attractive, but feral at the same time." **2) Nerull.** "I wanted to represent the essence of what the god embodied, not as a humanoid figure exactly, but as sort of a more allegorical or symbolic figure—hence the Medieval plague imagery of the *danse macabre*." **3) Geoffite Giant Killer.** "The spines on her armor make her difficult to pick up. She's using a pole-arm to attack large targets from a safe distance, and she's got a very large cleaver on her hip that she's used to lop off the head of a hill giant, which she has slung over her shoulder." **4) Amedio Suel.** "I liked the idea of a fair, sort of Nordic people who became jungle tribesmen. They're heavily freckled, with sun-bleached hair. You can see the volcanoes of the Hellfurnaces in the background." (**Continued on Page 108.**)

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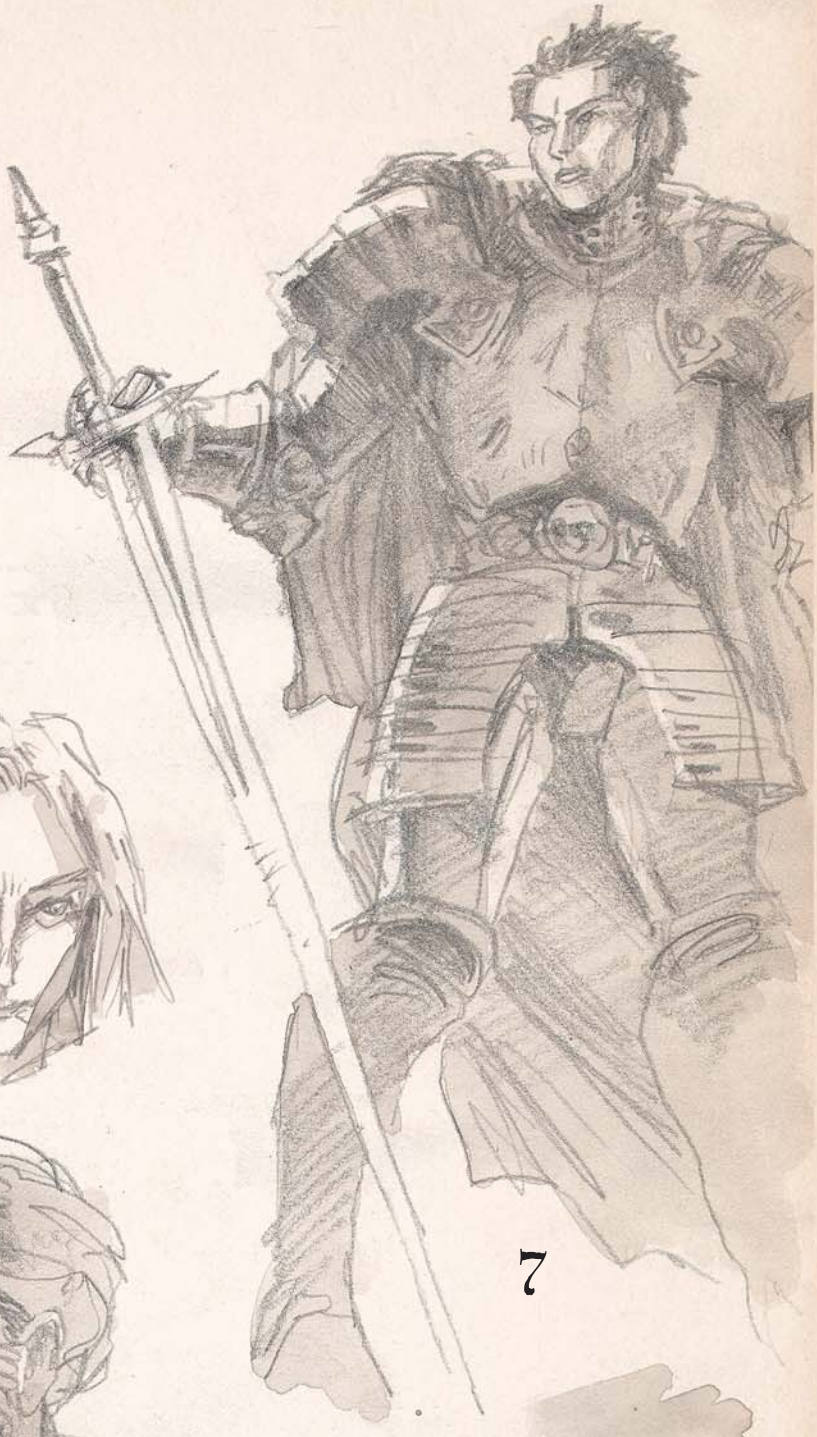

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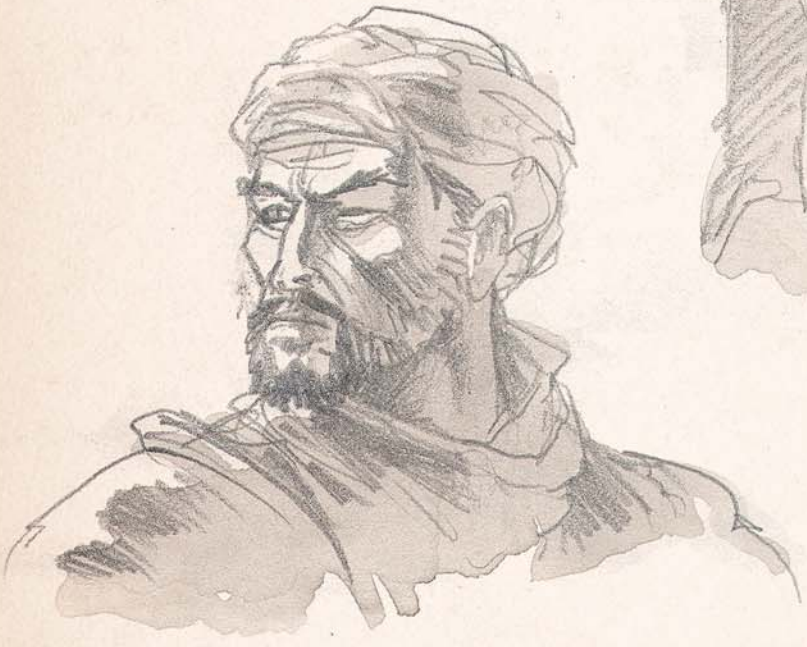

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Window on the World

(Continued from Page 106.)

5) **Iuz the Old (Rough).** "I didn't want the main villain of the setting to look human at all, and I wanted to emphasize his fiendish ancestry. I wanted the transition between his three forms to be very believable, so the same features are muted or exaggerated in each form." 6) **Halga.** "Iuz's high priestess has a neurotic sort of introverted, paranoid outlook." 7) **Althea.** "I wanted Iuz's other high priestess to look like a really abrasive, no-nonsense woman. I like the idea of a hard, almost tragic character, even though she's a villain." 8) **Kermin Mind-Bender.** "There was something about the original character that seemed redeemable, so he came off as less disgusting than the rest of Iuz's servants." 9) **Null.** "A straightforward case of trying to capture a character with a quick pencil and inkwash sketch." 10) **Iuz (Final).** "I was heavily inspired by the old 1st Edition Cambion picture. The armor is pure Abyss." 11) **The Circle of Eight.** From left to right: Warnes, Theodain, Alhamazad, Drawmij, Bigby, Nystul, Otto, and Jallarzi. "This was an attempt to update some of the old Ken Frank illustrations to the new GREYHAWK style. The sketch served as the template for the definitive Circle illustrations in the *LIVING GREYHAWK Journal* #0, though we made a few significant changes to Bigby and Nystul to better fit earlier descriptions and pictures of them. I liked the sense of encroaching age seen here."

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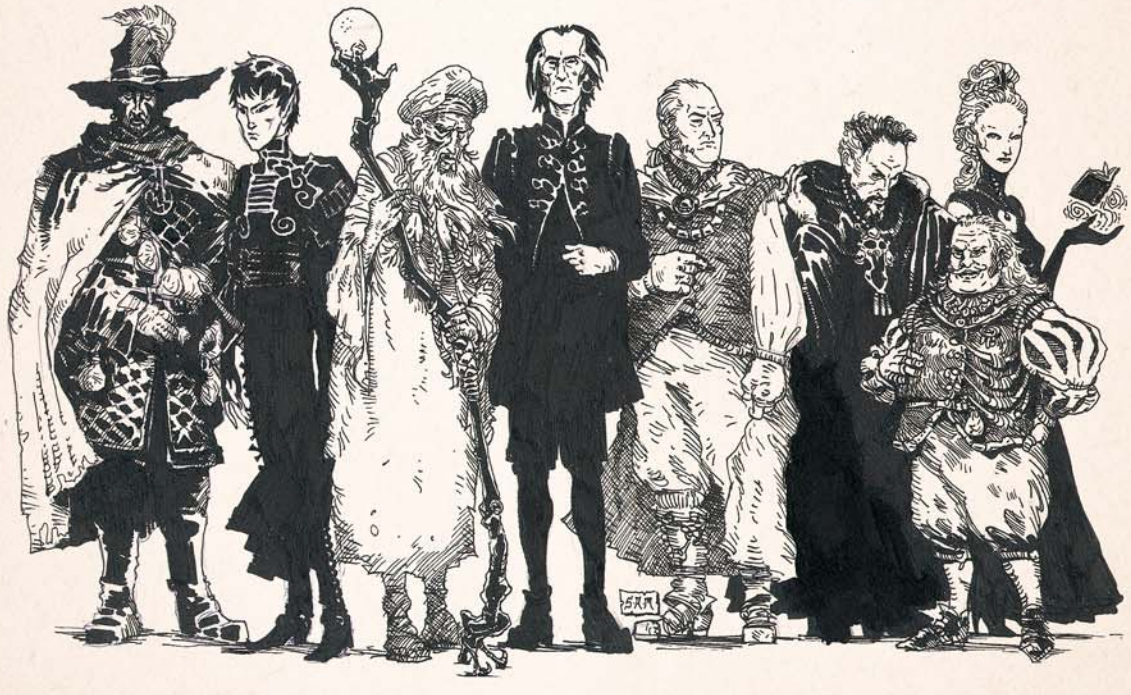

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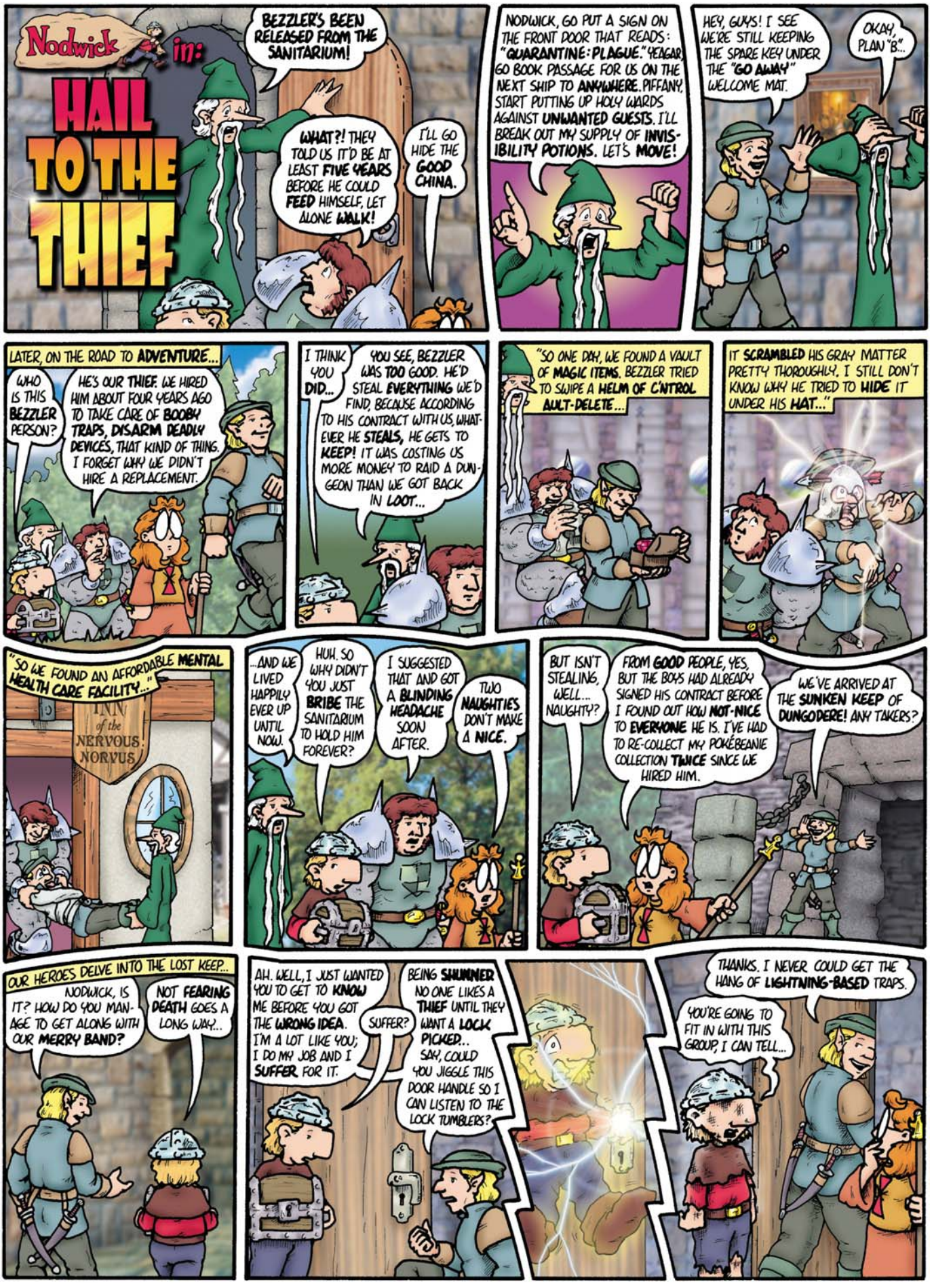
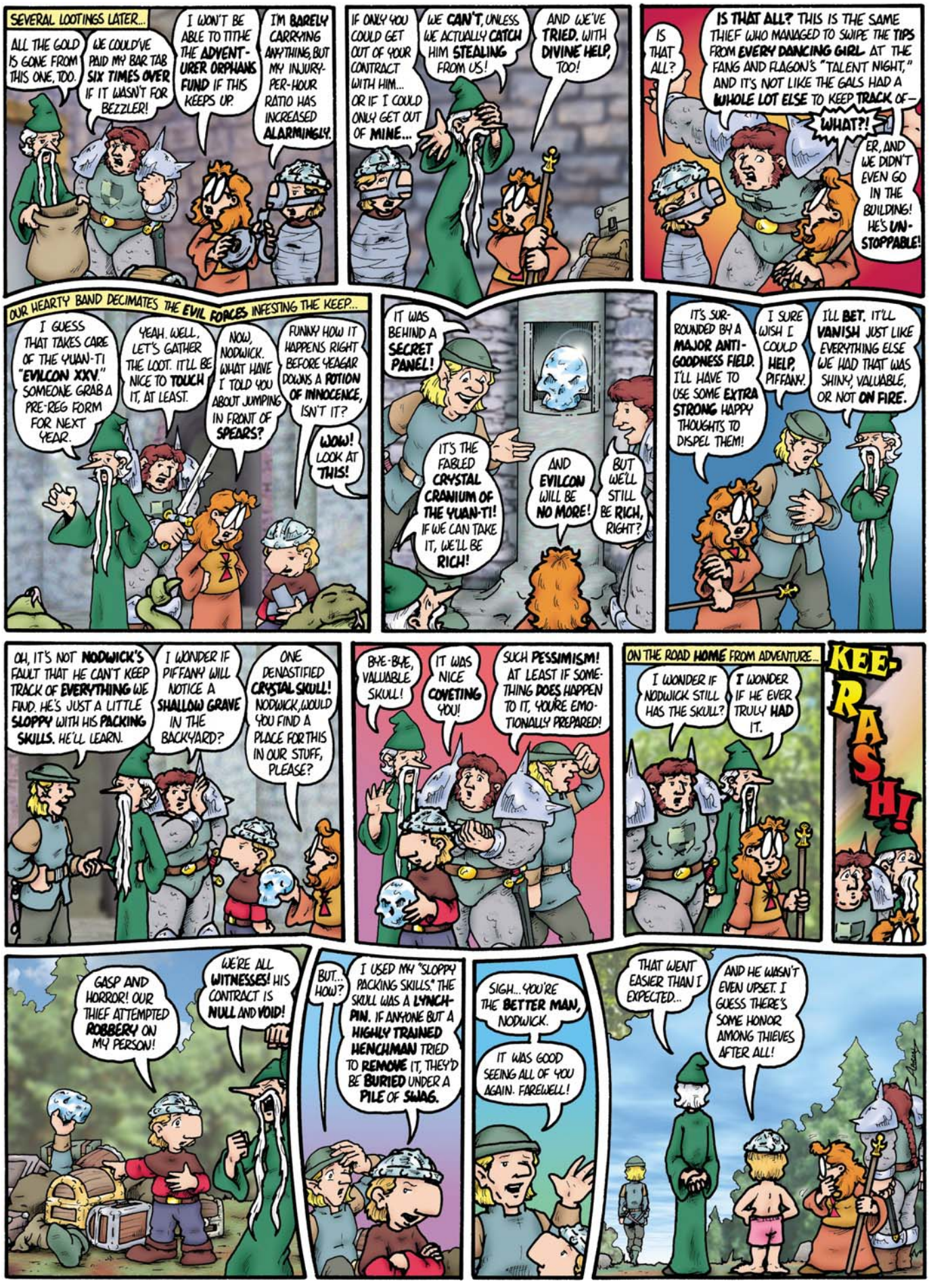

Nodwick in:
HAIL TO THE THIEF
BEZZLER'S BEEN RELEASED FROM THE SANITARIUM!
WHAT?! THEY TOLD US IT'D BE AT LEAST FIVE YEARS BEFORE HE COULD FEED HIMSELF, LET ALONE WALK!
I'LL GO HIDE THE GOOD CHINA.
NODWICK, GO PUT A SIGN ON THE FRONT DOOR THAT READS: "QUARANTINE: PLAGUE." YEAGAR, GO BOOK PASSAGE FOR US ON THE NEXT SHIP TO ANYWHERE. PIFFANY, START PUTTING UP HOLY WARDS AGAINST UNWANTED GUESTS. I'LL BREAK OUT MY SUPPLY OF INVISIBILITY POTIONS. LET'S MOVE!
HEY, GUYS! I SEE WE'RE STILL KEEPING THE SPARE KEY UNDER THE "GO AWAY" WELCOME MAT.
OKAY, PLAN "B"...
LATER, ON THE ROAD TO ADVENTURE...
WHO IS THIS BEZZLER PERSON?
HE'S OUR THIEF. WE HIRED HIM ABOUT FOUR YEARS AGO TO TAKE CARE OF BOOBY TRAPS, DISARM DEADLY DEVICES, THAT KIND OF THING. I FORGET WHY WE DIDN'T HIRE A REPLACEMENT.
I THINK YOU DID...
YOU SEE, BEZZLER WAS TOO GOOD. HE'D STEAL EVERYTHING WE'D FIND, BECAUSE ACCORDING TO HIS CONTRACT WITH US, WHATEVER HE STEALS, HE GETS TO KEEP! IT WAS COSTING US MORE MONEY TO RAID A DUNGEON THAN WE GOT BACK IN LOOT...
"SO ONE DAY, WE FOUND A VAULT OF MAGIC ITEMS. BEZZLER TRIED TO SWIPE A HELM OF C'NTROL ALT-DELETE...
IT SCRAMBLED HIS GRAY MATTER PRETTY THOROUGHLY. I STILL DON'T KNOW WHY HE TRIED TO HIDE IT UNDER HIS HAT..."
"SO WE FOUND AN AFFORDABLE MENTAL HEALTH CARE FACILITY..."
INN of the NERVOUS NORVUS
...AND WE LIVED HAPPILY EVER UP UNTIL NOW.
HUH. SO WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST BRIBE THE SANITARIUM TO HOLD HIM FOREVER?
I SUGGESTED THAT AND GOT A BLINDING HEADACHE SOON AFTER.
TWO NAUGHTIES DON'T MAKE A NICE.
BUT ISN'T STEALING, WELL... NAUGHTY?
FROM GOOD PEOPLE, YES, BUT THE BOYS HAD ALREADY SIGNED HIS CONTRACT BEFORE I FOUND OUT HOW NOT-NICE TO EVERYONE HE IS. I'VE HAD TO RE-COLLECT MY POKÉBEANIE COLLECTION TWICE SINCE WE HIRED HIM.
WE'VE ARRIVED AT THE SUNKEN KEEP OF DUNGODERE! ANY TAKERS?
OUR HEROES DELVE INTO THE LOST KEEP...
NODWICK, IS IT? HOW DO YOU MANAGE TO GET ALONG WITH OUR MERRY BAND?
NOT FEARING DEATH GOES A LONG WAY...
AH. WELL, I JUST WANTED YOU TO GET TO KNOW ME BEFORE YOU GOT THE WRONG IDEA. I'M A LOT LIKE YOU; I DO MY JOB AND I SUFFER FOR IT.
SUFFER?
BEING SHUNNED NO ONE LIKES A THIEF UNTIL THEY WANT A LOCK PICKED... SAY, COULD YOU JIGGLE THIS DOOR HANDLE SO I CAN LISTEN TO THE LOCK TUMBLERS?
THANKS. I NEVER COULD GET THE HANG OF LIGHTNING-BASED TRAPS.
YOU'RE GOING TO FIT IN WITH THIS GROUP, I CAN TELL...


SEVERAL LOOTINGS LATER...
ALL THE GOLD IS GONE FROM THIS ONE, TOO.
WE COULD'VE PAID MY BAR TAB SIX TIMES OVER IF IT WASN'T FOR BEZZLER!
I WON'T BE ABLE TO TITHE THE ADVENTURER ORPHANS FUND IF THIS KEEPS UP.
I'M BARELY CARRYING ANYTHING, BUT MY INJURY-PER-HOUR RATIO HAS INCREASED ALARMINGLY.
IF ONLY YOU COULD GET OUT OF YOUR CONTRACT WITH HIM... OR IF I COULD ONLY GET OUT OF MINE...
WE CAN'T, UNLESS WE ACTUALLY CATCH HIM STEALING FROM US!
AND WE'VE TRIED. WITH DIVINE HELP, TOO!
IS THAT ALL?
IS THAT ALL? THIS IS THE SAME THIEF WHO MANAGED TO SWIPE THE TIPS FROM EVERY DANCING GIRL AT THE FANG AND FLAGON'S "TALENT NIGHT," AND IT'S NOT LIKE THE GALS HAD A WHOLE LOT ELSE TO KEEP TRACK OF—
WHAT?!
ER, AND WE DIDN'T EVEN GO IN THE BUILDING! HE'S UNSTOPPABLE!
OUR HEARTY BAND DECIMATES THE EVIL FORCES INFESTING THE KEEP...
I GUESS THAT TAKES CARE OF THE YUAN-TI "EVILCON XXV." SOMEONE GRAB A PRE-REG FORM FOR NEXT YEAR.
YEAH. WELL, LET'S GATHER THE LOOT. IT'LL BE NICE TO TOUCH IT, AT LEAST.
NOW, NODWICK. WHAT HAVE I TOLD YOU ABOUT JUMPING IN FRONT OF SPEARS?
FUNNY HOW IT HAPPENS RIGHT BEFORE YEAGAR DOWNS A POTION OF INNOCENCE, ISN'T IT?
WOW! LOOK AT THIS!
IT WAS BEHIND A SECRET PANEL!
IT'S THE FABLED CRYSTAL CRANIUM OF THE YUAN-TI! IF WE CAN TAKE IT, WE'LL BE RICH!
AND EVILCON WILL BE NO MORE!
BUT WE'LL STILL BE RICH, RIGHT?
IT'S SURROUNDED BY A MAJOR ANTI-GOODNESS FIELD. I'LL HAVE TO USE SOME EXTRA STRONG HAPPY THOUGHTS TO DISPEL THEM!
I SURE WISH I COULD HELP, PIFFANY.
I'LL BET. IT'LL VANISH JUST LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE WE HAD THAT WAS SHINY, VALUABLE, OR NOT ON FIRE.
OH, IT'S NOT NODWICK'S FAULT THAT HE CAN'T KEEP TRACK OF EVERYTHING WE FIND. HE'S JUST A LITTLE SLOPPY WITH HIS PACKING SKILLS. HE'LL LEARN.
I WONDER IF PIFFANY WILL NOTICE A SHALLOW GRAVE IN THE BACKYARD?
ONE DENASTIFIED CRYSTAL SKULL! NODWICK, WOULD YOU FIND A PLACE FOR THIS IN OUR STUFF, PLEASE?
BYE-BYE, VALUABLE SKULL!
IT WAS NICE COVETING YOU!
SUCH PESSIMISM! AT LEAST IF SOMETHING DOES HAPPEN TO IT, YOU'RE EMOTIONALLY PREPARED!
ON THE ROAD HOME FROM ADVENTURE...
I WONDER IF NODWICK STILL HAS THE SKULL?
I WONDER IF HE EVER TRULY HAD IT.
KEE-RASH!
GASP AND HORROR! OUR THIEF ATTEMPTED ROBBERY ON MY PERSON!
WE'RE ALL WITNESSES! HIS CONTRACT IS NULL AND VOID!
BUT... HOW?
I USED MY "SLOPPY PACKING SKILLS." THE SKULL WAS A LYNCHPIN. IF ANYONE BUT A HIGHLY TRAINED HENCHMAN TRIED TO REMOVE IT, THEY'D BE BURIED UNDER A PILE OF SWAG.
SIGH... YOU'RE THE BETTER MAN, NODWICK.
IT WAS GOOD SEEING ALL OF YOU AGAIN. FAREWELL!
THAT WENT EASIER THAN I EXPECTED...
AND HE WASN'T EVEN UPSET. I GUESS THERE'S SOME HONOR AMONG THIEVES AFTER ALL!

by Rob Heinsoo

Command Points

Hopefully you've had a chance to play the new miniatures wargame, *Dungeons & Dragons Chainmail*. If you've played miniatures wargames before or if you have had the chance to watch someone play, you probably know that strategy and tactical planning can make or break the game for you. Designing an effective battle plan can be overwhelming, so here are eight tactics to employ that are more dependable than luck with a d20.

Each tactic presented has two basic ratings: difficulty of execution and impact on the game.

DIFFICULTY	IMPACT
: Easy, with practice you should be able to pull this off most every game	: Not such a big deal
: Simple, but not a sure thing	: Helpful
: Average difficulty, can be messed up by your opponent or bad luck	: Very useful trick, can help you win the game
: Hard to pull off, takes effort and skill	: Extremely effective tactic
: Very hard to get right	: Potentially decisive tactic

Tactics

Tailor your terrain to your warband.
Difficulty:
Impact:

The terrain you choose to bring to the table can determine your warband's tactics.

Range attack specialists: If you are playing a ranged weapon-happy warband, don't choose terrain that blocks line of sight. In fact, those with ranged weapon-dependent warbands shouldn't choose terrain that gives cover unless they feel confident of winning the scouting check (a d20 roll made to see which player chooses and places terrain first and decides who deploys first). Even then, they should only choose one piece of terrain that gives cover so that the opponent can't grab the second piece and take cover from the opposing force's arrows. Quagmires and stakes work best.

Melee specialists: If you win by hacking the foe to pieces, choose terrain that blocks line of sight, such as high walls and mausoleums.

Mixed ranged and melee models: If you're playing with just enough ranged firepower to force your enemy to come to you, and enough melee prowess to smack them down once they've struggled through your ranged attack, consider the low wall, and position your ranged weapon troops a few inches behind it. Put your melee troops next to the wall so that the enemy will be stuck on top of the wall—and thus get -2 to AC and a -2 to Attack—if they have no commander and come straight over the top.

Fast warbands: If you win by charging the enemy before they have time to maneuver, don't choose terrain that slows down movement. If you can see the enemy, you want to be able to charge the enemy.

Wild warbands: If you're playing with wild troops and don't want to spend all your command points holding them back, choose terrain that blocks line of sight in order to give your other models time to get into position.

Warbands that lack command: Avoid terrain that blocks line of sight, since it can keep your troops from approaching the enemy. If you need cover, choose briars.

Use terrain to dictate the center of the board.
Difficulty:
Impact:

The center of the board can be a powerful spot, and it offers some advantages. Models that are out of command can move toward the center of the board when they don't have a line of sight to an enemy model. This is helpful because battles are most often fought at the center of the table. Also, most scenarios give a default victory to the player whose models are closest to the center of the board if one player simply tries to avoid combat. The simplest trick is to place a high wall or other impassable piece of terrain about an inch onto the opponent's side of the board, giving your models access to the center and forcing your foe to come around to where your models are waiting.

Attack in force
Difficulty:
Impact:

There is strength in numbers, so when fighting an ordinary skirmish, coordinate your models' movements so that you can get them into contact with the enemy at roughly the same time.

If your warband doesn't have enough command points to coordinate its movements or has models with vastly different speeds, you'll want to give some thought to your setup. If some of your troops are significantly faster than your other models, and they are also difficult to command, set them up near your edge of the board. This gives your slower troops time to get a good start before your fast troops run past them. Also, remember that non-wild troops don't have to move when they are not under command; they can always choose to stand still.

Use the rules for charging to your advantage.
Difficulty:
Impact:

Every charging model must move in a straight line between the center of its

base toward the center of the base of the enemy it is charging. Any terrain that slows movement that the model's base would touch during the charge prevents the charge. In a similar manner, the presence of either friendly or enemy models prevents a model from charging if the charging model's base would "go over" another model's base during a charge.

You can use this rule to create a defensive or offensive strategy. You can defensively position your models so that terrain blocks your enemy's would-be charges. Offensively, you want to move your models into positions where they are most likely to get a straight and unimpeded run at the enemy model that will be closest to you the next time your model can act. If you have a number of melee troops who thrive by charging their enemies, it is important not to set your models too close together; your own troops can get in the way of otherwise perfect charges if they are in straight lines or tight clusters.

Each round, attack first with the models that are most likely to be eliminated next.
Difficulty:
Impact:

When one of your important or favorite models is attacked by an enemy and manages to survive, it is tempting to return the enemy model's attack immediately. However, that might not be your best option if you have other models that are in more danger of being eliminated during your opponent's next round. Each round, attack first with models that are more likely to be destroyed by your enemy's next attack. The exception is when the model that is at less risk has a significantly high chance of ending the threat in its entirety by eliminating enemy models that have yet to attack.

Eliminate an enemy model without killing it.
Difficulty:
Impact:

Sometimes the best way to get an enemy model off the board is to inflict half damage on the model so that it fails its morale save and routs off the board. (A routed model moves at full speed away from the enemy model that caused it to fail a morale save.) This is particularly true when the enemy model is a high-health monster like the Owlbear or the Abyssal Ravager, which can be extremely difficult to kill.

For a higher degree of difficulty, try to maneuver your models so that when they damage an enemy model and cause it to rout, the enemy will run off the table in one double-move instead of remaining on the table where it can be rallied on its next turn.

Be prepared for models to rout.
Difficulty:
Impact:

Know where your models will end up if they rout. That way, you can try to position your commander in a spot where it can easily move to place a routing model under command and give the model a chance to rally. For extra effectiveness, hold your commander where it can move within 6 inches of a routing model in order to give the model bonuses to its morale save.

Use healing to boost morale saves for rallying troops.
Difficulty:
Impact:

A model that has greater than half Health gets +5 to its morale save. Therefore, when your cleric, druid, paladin, or adept casts *cure wounds 1*, it can boost your model's chance to rally by 5 points, assuming that the 1 point of healing puts the model above half Health. Better yet, a model in contact with your commander can be given a 0-cost command that boosts its morale save for another 2 points. The combination of these two morale boosts can give even troops that are ordinarily too difficult to receive commands a +7 to their morale saves.

Check back next month to learn the history of the People's State of Mordengard and to get more strategy tips to help you win the game!

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by Mike McVey

Painting Your Warbands

Over the last couple of months we've been discussing the importance of group identity when painting miniatures for use in the new *Dungeons & Dragons Chainmail* game. So far, we've looked at the humans of Thalos and the dwarves of Mordengard as examples of how the miniatures in a warband should have a visual theme that ties them together. This month we are going to look at one of the most exciting and evocative of all the factions—Naresh.

Gnolls of Naresh

The gnoll and demon legions of Naresh offer a great challenge to the miniatures painter; the wide scope of figures offers the opportunity to let your painting skills shine and gives you a lot of choice regarding how to paint them. The overall effect of the Naresh miniatures should be dark and sinister, containing plenty of deep green and black. Unlike the Thalos warband (see issue #287) that was painted almost in uniform, Naresh miniatures have to be approached in a slightly different way. Although there is a definite palette, it's more an overall feel that you are going for to link the Naresh miniatures together.

Painting Gnolls

The gnolls form the backbone of the Naresh faction, and to a large extent, govern the way the faction looks on the battlefield. Gnolls are fun to paint—it's great to have something a little larger than human size to sink your teeth into. As mentioned above, you are going for an overall feel—you want them to look dark and baleful. You certainly don't want to paint them in light, cheerful colors! It's best to start with a black undercoat—you can leave it showing for really deep shading, and it makes the colors painted over it a little more muted. There are a few different surfaces to deal with on all the gnolls—mainly flesh, fur, and armor.

Flesh

The *Monster Manual* describes gnolls as having greenish-gray skin. However, since many of the legions of Naresh have demon blood in their veins, we decided to bring out more green on the miniatures, creating a stronger link to their demonic heritage. Start with an undercoat of black, and be sure to undercoat it a second time. Even though this is the undercoat color, make sure there are no areas of bare metal showing through. The base coat is a mix of deep green and black. Add just enough green to take the edge off the black, and apply this so that only the very deepest recesses are left dark.

The highlights are built up by adding more of the green paint into the mix and applying it just as you would when painting the flesh on any miniature. Remember that you don't want to make the highlights too light and spoil the sinister feel of this warband. The only place you might want to add some lighter highlights is under the eyes, to make them stand out. One of the best ways to make dark colors like this stand out is to create contrast with small areas of strong color. In the case of the gnolls, that color is red. Note that this is not a bright scarlet red but a deep, strong color that has been judiciously applied to small areas such as the eyes, claws, and horns. It's amazing what an effect such small areas can have on the overall paint scheme, and it definitely gives the eyes an evil gleam.

Fur

Gnolls have dirty, yellowish fur and manes, which blends well with their green skin tones and helps create a consistent feel. The first step to painting gnoll fur is to apply a deep base coat—a mix of black paint and deep brown ink works well. Adding ink to the paint creates a thinner mix that provides great coverage—the mix runs into the hard-to-reach areas.

The next stage is to apply a base color. You want a deep to medium brown, but make sure that it isn't a warm tone—using warm, reddish tones gives the fur a healthy appearance and clashes with the gnolls' green skin tones. When you apply this coat, leave the deeper color showing at the roots of the mane and in the recesses of the fur. This builds up areas of contrast that give the miniatures the dark and sinister look you are aiming for.

The highlights are built up by adding a neutral brown to the base coat and adding this color to the fur and longer mane. You can either drybrush these highlights on or, if you want to spend a little more time getting the effect just right, carefully paint them in. The number of highlight stages you add to the fur is dependent on how quickly you are painting your warband. I suggest adding two drybrushed highlight stages to your basic models and spending more time on

the leaders. For these, try applying four or five stages of highlighting. It's definitely worth spending more time on leaders of your warband to help make them stand out from the rank and file.

Armor and Weapons

There are a number of different ways to approach the armor on the Naresh models. For a simple, dramatic effect, paint it black. This not only fits in well with the overall effect you are going for, but it also gives a strong contrast with the lighter areas of fur. To maximize this contrast, it's best to highlight the black with cold tones—just add a tiny spot of both blue and white to the highlight mix.

When painting your warband's weapons, consider who is using them. For instance, the Thalos faction is a well-ordered militaristic society, so their weapons would be properly maintained. The Naresh faction, on the other hand, is wild and bloodthirsty. Their weapons would be worn down and probably blood-stained. Try to reflect this in the way you paint the weapons on the Naresh miniatures. It's best to use a black base coat and then build up with lighter tones of gunmetal and silver as you would when painting most weapons, but in this case, stop short of adding the final pure silver highlights. Instead, add some "weathering" to the weapon by mixing some blue and brown ink together. This gives a dirty purplish color that makes a great wash for metal weapons and armor. When this is dry, you can add a small amount of red and brown ink for bloodstains or even some orange to represent rust. Try experimenting. After all, you can always paint over if you don't like it.

Painting Tips at a Glance—Naresh Faction

Armor and Weapons

- Paint armor black and highlight by adding a dab of blue and white paint to the mix.
- Apply a black basecoat to all weapons, and then lighten with tones of gunmetal and silver.
- "Weather the weapon" by applying ink mix of blue and brown, then a touch of red and brown ink for blood.

Flesh

- Undercoat twice with a solid black color.
- Apply a black basecoat with a hint of green.
- Highlight by adding more green to basecoat, but don't overdo.
- Contrast small areas with a touch of red.

Fur

- Apply a mix of black paint and dark-brown ink to cover all hard-to-reach areas.
- Apply a basecoat of deep brown, leaving the deeper color showing at the roots.
- Highlight by adding a neutral brown to the basecoat. Use the drybrushing technique to save some time.

Demons

Presently, there are two demonic creatures in the Naresh faction: the Abyssal Ravager and the Abyssal Maw. The Ravager is best painted in colors similar to the gnolls. However, the really interesting areas, such as the tail and bare skin, need to be treated a little differently. These areas should be painted to look thoroughly unpleasant. Try fading the green flesh into lighter tones of green and adding purple and blue shading to give a bruised effect. You might also try fading from black into red at the end of the tail.

In some ways, the smaller Abyssal Maw gives you even more options—it's such a strange and bizarre-looking creature that you could paint it in numerous different ways. The Abyssal Maw shown here has tones and colors that give its flesh the raw, bruised look. Light flesh has been mixed with green and pink tones and then shaded with blues, purples, and reds. The most prominent feature on this miniature is the gaping maw. To make this stand out it was painted black inside, while the teeth were painted an off-white color. This miniature is great to paint because it really gives you a chance to try out new effects that you wouldn't use on many of the other miniatures.

SAGE ADVICE

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This month the Sage considers several questions relevant to monster player characters, the ins and outs of attacks of opportunity, and divine spell preparation.

Can I use the Tumble skill to avoid any attacks of opportunity I might otherwise suffer when moving away from an opponent?

Suppose I'm a spellcaster or an archer and I'm toe-to-toe with a foe. If I want to move away and cast a spell or fire my bow, but also want to avoid getting hit by an attack of opportunity, how do I accomplish that? From what I understand, moving away from the opponent triggers an attack of opportunity if I'm doing more than a 5-foot step, and if I'm doing more than just moving. It doesn't matter that I'm no longer in a threatened area when I cast the spell or fire the arrow; the fact that my action is not just movement and not just a 5-foot step will trigger an attack of opportunity. Correct?

You seem to be confusing two exceptions to the rules for triggering an attack of opportunity (see page 122 in the *Player's Handbook*). Leaving a space your opponent threatens triggers an attack of opportunity unless your only movement for the turn is a 5-foot step; however, you can sometimes move more than 5 feet and avoid an attack of opportunity. If your only action is to move, then you can treat the first space you leave as if it is not threatened, and leaving that space does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

If you choose the first option (a 5-foot step as your sole movement), then what you do afterward has no effect on what happens when you leave the threatened space. For example, you take a 5-foot step back and cast a spell. If the 5-foot step puts you in a space your opponent does not threaten, then you will not trigger an attack of opportunity from that opponent when you cast the spell. Think of this tactic as waiting for an opportune moment to leap back out of harm's way before casting the spell.

If you choose the second option (just moving away), then what you do after leaving the space is relevant to what happens when you leave the space. This option represents a careful withdrawal from combat. The only thing you can do in a turn when you make such a withdrawal is move. If you try anything else during the turn, you're not carefully withdrawing and you trigger an attack of opportunity when you leave the space. There are ways to exit the space, move more than 5 feet, and avoid the attack of opportunity. There also are some ways to prevent opponents from just stepping back 5 feet from you and casting spells or making ranged attacks (see the next two questions).

Can I use the Tumble skill to avoid any attacks of opportunity I might otherwise suffer when moving away from an opponent? If I do so, can I still cast a spell or fire a bow after moving?

Yes you can. A successful Tumble check (DC 15) allows you to move up to 20 feet through threatened squares without triggering any attacks of opportunity. This counts as a move action for you, but you can move and cast or fire, provided that the distance you've tumbled doesn't exceed your speed. If your speed is more than 20, you can finish out your move normally before casting or firing. For example, if your speed is 30, you can tumble 20 feet, triggering no attacks of opportunity, then move 10 more feet before shooting or casting a spell. In any case, if you wind up in a space that isn't threatened after tumbling, then you won't trigger any attacks of opportunity for what you do in that space.

Note that you cannot use the Tumble skill if your speed has been reduced by armor or encumbrance (see the Tumble skill description on page 75 of the *Player's Handbook*). If you're carrying a fairly large weapon, such as a longbow or any kind of crossbow (except for a hand crossbow), your DM might impose a circumstance penalty on your Tumble check.

I have a fighter character. Is there any way I can keep enemy spellcasters and archers from simply stepping 5 feet back from me and blasting me with ranged attacks or spells?

Yes, but you probably don't need to. The foe's 5-foot step keeps you from making an attack of opportunity when the opponent fires or casts a spell, but on your turn you can take a 5-foot step of your own and use the full attack action to chop the foe to bits. Alternatively, you could prepare an action to disrupt a spellcaster and you can make a 5-foot step or even a partial charge to close with the spellcaster and deliver the attack.

You can't disrupt an archer, but if you're getting tired of the step back and shoot tactic, consider using a reach weapon. That way, you'll still threaten

POWER PLAY

Tough as Nails by Stephen Schubert

A 1st-level dwarf paladin with a 16 Charisma, 20 Constitution, and the Great Fortitude feat is extremely resistant to poisons, spells that require Fortitude saving throws, and other such debilitating effects. She has 15 hit points, is immune to all diseases, and has a +14 to Fortitude saving throws vs. poison or spell-like effects (+2 base, +5 Constitution, +2 Great Fortitude, +3 divine grace, +2 dwarf).

POWER PLAY

Hit Hard, Hit Often by Stephen Schubert

A 10th-level character with 6 levels of sorcerer and 4 levels of fighter, a 20 Strength, Weapon Focus, and Weapon Specialization would have +13 to his first attack (+7 base, +5 Strength, +1 for Weapon Focus), and +7 to damage (+5 Strength, +2 Weapon Specialization), not counting any magic weapon he might have obtained. If he knows the spells *haste* and *true strike,* the character could cast *true strike* as the hasted partial action, and then gain the +20 to hit with his standard action attack, for a total of +33 to hit. With the Power Attack, Cleave, and Great Cleave feats, he could divert his entire base attack (+7) to boost damage with Power Attack, and still have a bonus of +26 (+5 Strength, +1 Weapon Focus, +20 insight bonus) to hit with +14 (+5 Strength, +2 Weapon Specialization, +7 Power Attack) to damage with his first attack and his cleave attempts.

foes 10 feet away from you. Of course, you don't threaten foes who are only 5 feet away when you're armed with most reach weapons. You can solve that problem by having an ally who can threaten the spaces adjacent to you or by gaining the Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain) feat, as the spiked chain is a reach weapon that also works against foes 5 feet away.

Also, don't forget grappling or striking the foe's weapon. Most spellcasters won't be holding a weapon, and foes holding ranged weapons don't threaten you, so you don't have to worry about triggering an attack of opportunity when using either tactic. Foes you've grappled won't be able to step away from you until they escape your hold. Striking a foe's weapon is often less troublesome, and if you break it, you won't need to worry about ranged attacks. Normally you need to make an opposed attack roll to strike a foe's weapon or shield, but if the item you're striking is not a melee weapon or a shield, just use the rules for striking a held, carried, or worn object (pages 135 and 136 in the *Player's Handbook*). Again, you'd normally trigger an attack of opportunity for striking the foe's equipment, but a foe armed with a ranged weapon doesn't threaten you.

This can be a very effective tactic against opponents armed with bows. A longbow, composite longbow, or heavy crossbow has an Armor Class of 14 (base 10, -1 for size, +5 for being a held object) plus the wielder's Dexterity bonus and whatever deflection bonus the wielder might have, which makes it a fairly easy target. A shortbow, short composite bow, light crossbow, or repeating crossbow has an Armor Class of 15 (same as a longbow, but no size adjustment because these weapons are Medium-size). Bows have hardness 5 and 2 hit points (just like spears), crossbows are tougher (hardness 10, 5 hit points). If you have multiple attacks, it's usually best to aim your attacks with the highest attack bonuses at the opponent and save your later attacks with lower attack bonuses for the weapon. Often, you'll have difficulty hitting the opponent with these attacks, but you'll find the weapon an easier target.

You also could do the following: Ready an action so that when the archer steps away from you, you make a partial charge against him (or just a 5-foot step and an attack). When you've finished your attack, he's within your reach and you'll get an attack of opportunity against him if he tries to shoot. The higher level you are, however, the worse the trade-off between taking a single attack with a prepared action and taking the full attack action.

The *Player's Handbook* says you can use a buckler and fire a bow or crossbow without penalty. Does this mean you get the armor bonus from the buckler while firing the bow or crossbow?

No. You can't use the buckler's armor bonus during any round when you fire the bow or crossbow. Once you fire, you lose the buckler's armor bonus until your next turn.

I play a divine spellcaster and I generally leave a spell slot open. I'm concerned about whether I am following the rules correctly. After reading the *Player's Handbook*, I have assumed that divine casters can leave slots open; although, they must still perform

THE UNSPEAKABLE OAF by John Kovalic
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"YES THOSE WERE SANTA'S ELVES WHO ATTACKED US. WHO ELSE WOULD HAVE A FIRST-LEVEL SPELL CALLED "MAGIC MISTLETOE?"

Answer to Mind Blast: TREE STRIDE and TRUE STRIKE.

the daily prayer session in order to prepare any spells that day. However, I can understand the argument that all spells must be prepared at the daily prayer session, and no slots can be left open. Page 156 of the *Player's Handbook* says a divine caster's mind is only considered fresh during his first daily spell preparation, so he cannot fill a slot that is empty because he has cast a spell or abandoned a previously prepared spell. I'm a little confused by this statement.

A divine spellcaster does not have to prepare all his spells at once (also from page 156 in the *Player's Handbook*). This means you can leave slots open.

The text you've quoted merely points out that you can replace spells you have cast or can switch prepared (but uncast) spells for other prepared spells when your mind is fresh (and only then). If you've left open slots, you can fill them in 15 minutes, even when your mind is not fresh. Arcane casters have the same rule (see page 154 of the *Player's Handbook*).

The Powerful Races sidebar on page 21 of the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* book says you use the character's effective character level (ECL) for determining how much money and experience the character has when starting play. But what about other level-dependent features, such as ability increases and feats? What level is important for these? Character level or ECL?

Use ECL for awarding the character experience and for determining how much experience the character needs to gain a new level. Use character level for everything else.

For example, an aasimar character has an ECL of +1; a 1st-level aasimar sorcerer is effectively a 2nd-level character, so that character starts play with 1,000 xp and 900 gp for equipment (see Table 3–2 in the *Player's Handbook* and Table 2–24 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). This character has the skills, feats, saving throws, and spells of a 1st-level sorcerer. The character needs 3,000 xp to add her next character level. When the character adds two more character levels (3rd level, but effectively 4th) she gains a feat, just as a regular 3rd-level character does. When she adds a 4th character level (4th-level, effectively 5th), she can add a point to an ability score, just as a regular 4th-level character does.

Table 3–11 in the *Player's Handbook* shows speed and damage for Small monk characters. The table seems to assume a base speed of 20 feet for Small characters. How do you determine a monk character's speed if his racial speed is not 20 feet or 30 feet? How do you determine a monk's damage if he is not Small or Medium-size?

Use the table below. It is an expanded version of a similar table from *Sword and Fist*.

Monk Speed by Level and Base Speed*

	70	60	50	40	30	20	15	10	5
1–2	70	60	50	40	30	20	15	10	5
3–5	90	80	65	50	40	25	20	15	10
6–8	110	100	80	60	50	35	25	20	15
9–11	130	120	95	70	60	40	30	25	20
12–14	150	140	115	80	70	45	35	30	25
15–17	170	160	125	90	80	55	40	35	30
18–20	190	180	140	100	90	60	45	40	35

*If a base speed falls between the numbers on this table, use the lower of the two values. For example, a 6th-level monk whose race has a base speed of 45 would have a speed of 60.

For speeds of 65 and higher, just round down to the nearest multiple of 10, subtract 60 from the result, and add the difference to the number shown on the "60" column. The "70" column is an example.

The table below (which is an expanded version of a similar table from *Sword and Fist*) shows unarmed damage for monks of various sizes:

Monk Damage by Size and Level

	1–3	4–7	8–11	12–15	16–20
Fine	1	1d2	1d3	1d4	1d6
Diminutive	1d2	1d3	1d4	1d6	1d8
Tiny	1d3	1d4	1d6	1d8	1d10
Small	1d4	1d6	1d8	1d10	2d6
Medium	1d6	1d8	1d10	1d12	1d20
Large	1d8	1d10	1d12	2d8	2d10
Huge	1d10	1d12	2d8	2d10	2d12
Gargantuan	1d12	2d8	2d10	2d12	4d8
Colossal	2d8	2d10	2d12	4d8	4d10

The description for the rogue class says Medium-size rogues are proficient in a specific subset of weapons. Are rogues of larger than Medium-size also proficient in these weapons? For example, can a titan rogue proficiently use a huge heavy mace? Small rogues have slightly fewer weapon proficiencies. Is a small rogue proficient with a small club? Is a Tiny rogue proficient with a Tiny club or morningstar?

If your rogue is smaller than Small size, use the weapons listed for a Small rogue (see page 47 in the *Player's Handbook*), but diminished one size category for each size category that the rogue is smaller than Small-size. If your rogue is bigger than Medium-size, use the weapons listed for a Medium-size rogue (see page 47 in the *Player's Handbook*), but enlarged one size category for each size category that the rogue is larger than Medium-size. The table below shows the damage ratings.

Bigger and Smaller Weapon Damage by Creature Size

	Colossal	Gargantuan	Huge	Large	Tiny	Diminutive	Fine
Club*	4d6	2d8	2d6	1d8	1d4	1d3	1d2
Composite Shortbow	4d6	2d8	2d6	1d8	1d4	1d3	1d2
Dagger	2d8	2d6	1d8	1d6	1d3	1d2	1
Dart	2d8	2d6	1d8	1d6	1d3	1d2	1
Hand Crossbow	2d8	2d6	1d8	1d6	1d3	1d2	1
Heavy Crossbow*	2d20	2d12	1d20	1d12	1d8	1d6	1d4
Heavy Mace*	4d8	4d6	2d8	2d6	1d6	1d4	1d3
Light Crossbow	2d12	1d20	1d12	1d10	1d6	1d4	1d3
Light Mace	4d6	2d8	2d6	1d8	1d4	1d3	1d2
Morningstar*	4d8	4d6	2d8	2d6	1d6	1d4	1d3
Quarterstaff*	4d6/4d6	2d8/2d8	2d6/2d6	1d8/1d8	1d4/1d4	1d3/1d3	1d2/1d2
Rapier*	4d6	2d8	2d6	1d8	1d4	1d3	1d2
Sap	4d6[s]	2d8[s]	2d6[s]	1d8[s]	1d4[s]	1d3[s]	1d2[s]
Shortbow	4d6	2d8	2d6	1d8	1d4	1d3	1d2
Shortsword	4d6	2d8	2d6	1d8	1d4	1d3	1d2

[s]Subdual damage.

*Rogues of Small or smaller size are not proficient with these weapons or their diminished counterparts. DMs might allow smaller rouges to be proficient with such weapons if they are of an appropriate size. In such a case, Small rogues would use the damages listed for Tiny rogues.

How do you determine when a character of a powerful race gains feats and ability score increases?

How do you determine when a character of a powerful race gains feats and ability score increases? For example, the *Monster Manual* and the article on creating monsters in issue #276 say that an aberration with 6 Hit Dice and an Intelligence score of 10 would have 1 feat. Since characters gain a feat every three levels and an ability score adjustment every 4 levels, an aberration character is entitled to 2 extra feats and an ability score increase, right?

When a creature has 2 or more Hit Dice, those Hit Dice count as levels, but until the creature adds a character class, its skills, feats, saves, and attack bonuses are solely determined by its type, hit dice, and ability scores. (If the creature has only a single Hit Die, its first class Hit Die replaces the racial Hit Die and the character functions as any other member of its class).

When the example character adds a character level, it becomes a 7th-level character and gets whatever Table 3–2 in the *Player's Handbook* says a 7th-level character gets (which is nothing). The character doesn't get "credit" for its racial levels. You do treat the character like a multiclass character adding one level of a class (so the character will get skill points, bonus feats from the class, class features, and the appropriate attack and save bonuses). It gets an ability score increase at level 8 (after adding 2 class levels) and a feat at level 9 (after adding 3 class levels).

The assassin prestige class has a prerequisite of 8 ranks in Hide. Is that 8 ranks as in what was purchased with skill points, or 8 ranks total? That is, if my character had a Dexterity score of 28, (+8 Dexterity bonus to Hide) would I meet the Hide prerequisite for the assassin class? How about if I had a racial modifier that was +8 to Hide?

You would not meet the prerequisite in either example case. You have to buy 8 ranks in the Hide skill—that's why the prerequisite says "ranks" instead of "score" or "bonus."

According to page 104 in the *Player's Handbook*, you suffer a penalty to skill checks that involve moving if you're not proficient with the kind of armor you wear. What skills does this refer to?

The armor nonproficiency penalty applies to Balance, Climb, Disable Device*, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Open Lock*, Pick Pocket, Ride*, and Tumble.

*This skill does not normally have an armor check penalty, but it has the armor nonproficiency penalty.

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by Johnny L. Wilson

The Elder Scrolls: Morrowind
Using Its Dungeon Design Tools

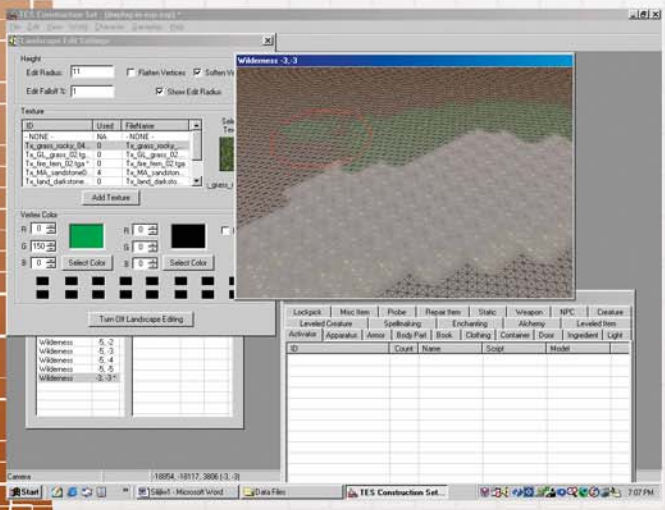
Most computer roleplaying games only allow you to play within the walls fashioned by their design teams. Software publishers spend more than a million dollars to create the tools they use to craft their digital worlds, and they haven't been prone to giving those tools away to consumers until they are finished with them. Interplay published *The Bard's Tale Construction Set* when they were finished with the software engine from that series, and Strategic Simulations, Inc. published the tools from their gold box adventure series as *Unlimited Adventures.* In late 2001, Bethesda Softworks will break the chain by offering world, dungeon, object, character, and game-rule creation tools at the same time as they release the long-awaited sequel to their award winning *The Elder Scrolls: Arena* and *The Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall.* This concluding opus in the trilogy, *The Elder Scrolls: Morrowind,* offers tools for designing tabletop adventures and allows you to create *Elder Scrolls* adventures of your own.

Lord, truly thy decree is first among gods.
Say but to wreck or create; it shall be.
–Enuma Elish, Tablet IV, lines 21-22

The Elder Scrolls: Morrowind is expected to ship with the most robust set of design tools seen in years. Exteriors and interiors are designed one cell at a time, and these cells can be snapped symmetrically to the grid of a larger map to form the whole. Each cell represents one square of a grid that can be as large as the DM wants to create it. In turn, each exterior cell is made up of a grid that is 8,192 units by 8,192 units, representing an area of 148,225 square feet (385 ft. by 385 ft.). Each exterior cell is given a grid number upon creation that regulates their position on an X/Y axis from the center of the world.
Once the cell is created, an exterior cell can be adorned with a variety of rock, grass, marsh, lava, and water textures. Then, the landscape itself can be stretched and raised to create terrain of various heights. Once the world looks the way it should, it is possible to place creature encounters, NPC positions, landmarks, villages, and dungeon entrances on the landscape. Of course, map generators have been around almost as long as computers themselves. The uniqueness of *The Elder Scrolls Construction Set* is that it allows the creation of 3-D dungeon maps as well.

Let its brickwork be fashioned.
You shall name it "The Sanctuary."
–Enuma Elish, Tablet VI, line 58

After *The Elder Scrolls: Morrowind* is released, dungeons will be as easy to design as putting building blocks together. To create a small dungeon you just need to name and define a new cell. The name can be anything, and defining the cell merely indicates water level and whether player characters can rest in the dungeon or not. Prefabricated structures are already available and can be snapped together to form a dungeon like Lego bricks can form a street. Once the basic structure is snapped together, you need only place a link between the exterior cell and the interior cell so that player characters will be able to navigate the dungeon. Of course, if one cell isn't large enough to hold the complex map a DM has envisioned for a given dungeon, it is possible to connect



The Plain! When planting various types of terrain, it helps to begin with the wireframe vertices of the cell. Here, coastline, grass, lichen, and sandstone are represented within the cell view for Wilderness -3, -3.

a cell to another cell, just as the exterior cells are connected together.

Naturally, a dungeon that exists merely as a map wouldn't be very interesting. So, the *The Elder Scrolls Construction Set* allows DMs to click and drag creature encounters, NPC events, and treasure locations right onto the cell. If specific events are to take place when the player characters activate those spots on the map, DMs can script everything from magical effects, combat tactics, narratives, and NPC conversations by using the tools.

May he shepherd the black-headed ones, his creatures.
—Enuma Elish, Tablet VI, line 107

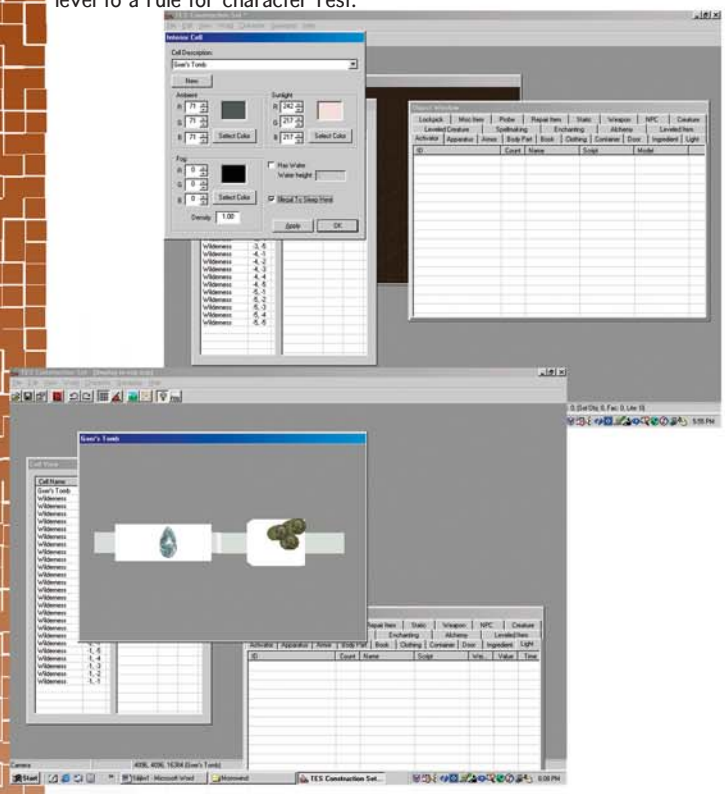
You create creatures in much the same way as locations. The DM either selects a pre-existing race out of the game's master file or defines a new race. In *The Elder Scrolls: Morrowind*, races are defined by appearance, bonus skills, and magical attributes. Each race can have up to six bonus skills, and the numerical value given to each of these skills is added to the base attribute in much the same way as ranks and attribute modifiers for a given skill are added to a d20 roll in DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. DMs creating normal characters to function within Tamriel, the world in which The Elder Scrolls trilogy takes place, will want to limit the total of points for bonus skills to 45. In the same way, DMs creating normative characters for Tamriel will want to total 320 points for the 8 basic attributes (Strength, Intelligence, Will, Agility, Speed, Endurance, Personality, and Luck). Next, DMs will assign a height/weight ratio for the characters and creatures. This will determine the rendered height and weight in comparison to other characters and creatures in the game world. Finally, the DM determines whether players are permitted to choose the race or not.

The good news is that a new race can be defined in a few minutes. The bad news is that DMs must use either the existing art resources from other races for the body parts to be used with the new race or create their own. As a result, new dungeons and worlds are much simpler to create and have rendered by the program than new races.

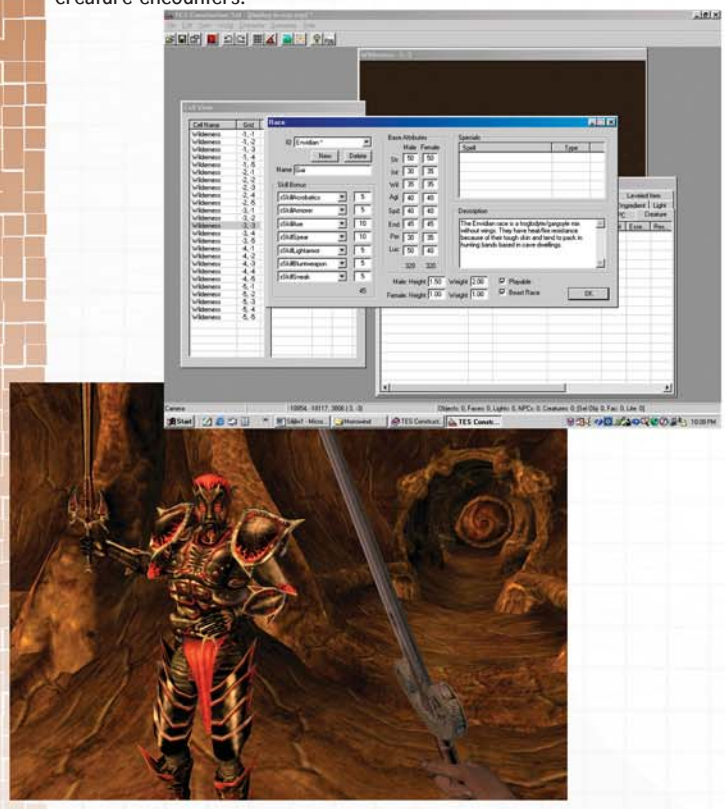
When they beheld the bow, how skillful its shape,
His fathers praised the work he had wrought.
—Enuma Elish, Tablet VI, lines 84-85.

Everything in the design tools for *The Elder Scrolls: Morrowind* allows DMs to define and redefine the world, its locations, its encounters, and its rewards (artifacts, wealth, and weapons) from the ground up. As plug-ins are added to the published inventory by the public, the world of Tamriel provided by Bethesda Softworks will grow with assets, characters, locations, and potential. Both DMs and players have more to look forward to in this open-ended computer game than in any previous computer roleplaying game. Never before have such risks been taken. Here's hoping this new world of computer roleplaying proves worth those risks.

Bare Necessities: Initial dungeon creation requires naming an interior cell and determining its properties from ambient light and water level to a rule for character rest.



Tomb Maker: By clicking and dragging a temple structure and prison complex onto the cell, the basic dungeon layout was assembled. Treasures were dropped in the same manner, and the tomb awaits creature encounters.



Admissions Office: A new race begins with the basic statistical outline placed into the database pictured here, but it won't look as good as the accompanying races from *The Elder Scrolls: Morrowind* unless DMs provide art resources comparative to the great work being done by the design team.

by Robin D. Laws • illustrated by John Kovalic

Ability Combos III

YOU | I get a 25.

DM | Holy smokes! That's pretty good for a Strength check. Well, Farnjah's push gets the barrels rolling. They pelt down the hill and send the goblins scattering. But I warned you her footing was treacherous. Make a Balance check.

YOU | [Rolls die.] That's a 9, minus 2 . . . I got a 7. Here we go again.

Last time around, we started to look at "ability combos"—collections of personality traits a character is likely to possess if he has a low score in one ability and a high score in another—and what those combinations imply about your character. (If you need a refresher on this concept, be sure to reread issues #288 and #289.) Keep in mind that you aren't restricted to playing your character one particular way. These ability combos merely provide quick inspiration when that's what you need.

So far we've discussed the obvious combos, those that involve the three personality-related abilities: Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. However, our personalities are also shaped by our physical capabilities, and the same should be true of D&D characters, too. So let's conclude our series with a look at a few sample physical ability combos.

High Strength, Low Dexterity

"Go ahead. Have a good laugh."

Everybody seems to think that big, strong people are also slow and clumsy. Like it or not—and you probably don't—you fit this popular stereotype. Consequently, you get teased a lot, even by your friends. It has never seemed fair to you; no one laughs half as hard when a weak, clumsy guy knocks over a chair or spills his flagon of mead for the third time in the same night. But life isn't fair; that's one thing you learned early. You've also learned that people, especially children, fear big, strong people. They're afraid of being beaten up or bossed around, so anything they can do to make you feel small, they'll do.

Maybe this makes you feel sorry for them. If so, you try to take the teasing in stride. What do you care if people have a good laugh at your expense now and then? You've learned to laugh, too. After all, it is ironic that somebody as powerful as you often trips over his own big feet.

Or maybe you've grown resentful. Either way, you have one big advantage: Most people assume that strong, clumsy folk are also stupid, and that isn't necessarily the case with you. Being underestimated can be very useful. Sometimes you play dumb, to put enemies and rivals off their guard. They realize, too late, that you're smart enough to know exactly when to use your strength against them.

High Dexterity, Low Strength

"If you can't hit hard, hit often."

You've always been frail and puny, and no matter what you eat or how hard you work your muscles, you've never managed to change that fact. But you're also fast, supple, and good with your hands, and you've decided that strength isn't all it's cracked up to be. When you were a child, you liked to show your strongest friends that being fast was better than being mighty. They would try to grab you and put you in a hold, but they were never able to lay a hand on you; you were long gone before they even got close.

Now that you're older, you apply this technique to most difficulties you encounter. Your solution to a problem is to move in quickly, see what you can hit, and get out even faster when something bigger than you comes thundering your way. You act quickly, think on your feet, and are always ready to

BECAUSE I'M BIG AND CLUMSY, EVERYBODY ASSUMES I'M DUMB AND FORGETFUL.
WHAT A GREAT ADVANTAGE!
YES. PLUS, BECAUSE I'M BIG AND CLUMSY, EVERYBODY ASSUMES I'M DUMB AND FORGETFUL...
KOVALIC

flee. You hate situations with no obvious escape route.

As far as you're concerned, long, tedious planning sessions just waste time, giving the enemy more time to prepare. Go in and shake things up, that's your credo. Some people only want to act when they know they can knock the enemy down with one big, decisive hit. But you know that a foe can be whittled down by degrees. Hit and run, hit again, and run some more.

Some people call you a coward. In your opinion, their definition of bravery is standing around and waiting for the enemy to knock them flat. That's not valor, that's stupidity.

Low Strength, High Constitution

"You can dish it out, but can you take it?"

Lifting and breaking objects doesn't make a hero. As far as you're concerned, the ability to take a good hit—or three or four good hits—and still keep going is much more important. It's not the person who does the most damage who wins the fight—it's the one who's still standing at the end. What good is strength when you've keeled over from your wounds or when you've been laid low by illness? Your resistance to pain and sickness has kept you going when lesser men have fallen. Naturally, you've come to value resilience and endurance over sheer power.

This applies to other areas of your life, too. You evaluate enemies not by their ability to strike, but by how hard you have to hit them to put them down. When you look at a problem, you take the long view. All the strategy in the world won't help you if you haven't thought out the ultimate goal. Maybe you and your friends can take the tower—but can you hold it? It's not about winning the battle; it's the war that counts.

You might seem like a pessimist under normal circumstances, but when things go bad, it's your voice that swells with inspiration. You're always ready to argue for a come-from-behind victory against impossible odds. The heroes you most admire are those who soldier on and triumph through sheer bravery and determination. Because you ask the hard questions when things seem rosy and get optimistic when the odds are against you, your comrades tend to view you as contrary. You use another, simpler word to describe yourself: tough.

We could spend the next year discussing every ability combo. Instead, having addressed plenty of examples, let's turn the idea over to you and your current character. It's simple: Look at the highest and lowest ability scores on your character sheet and see what that contrast tells you about your character.

It's not the person who does the most damage
who wins the fight—it's the one who's still standing at the end.

STEVE	We run down to the bottom of the hill to collect Farnjah.
YOU	Farnjah girds herself for their inevitable smart remarks about her strength and clumsiness. As always, she stifles her urge to show them how it feels to fall down the side of a mountain.

by Johnn Four

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Build The Ultimate DM's Binder

An organized and well-stocked binder is a DM's best friend. It helps you run games faster and more smoothly, provides ways to come up with new ideas quickly, and allows for more exciting storytelling by helping you keep the campaign details straight.

Putting a DM's binder together is simple: Just grab an old binder or clipboard, insert some campaign notes that will be helpful to you, and start adding to the binder each time you plan your next game session. Over time, you'll build up your binder to suit your specific DMing style and your gaming group's unique needs.

If you already have a binder or notebook, don't feel left out. This article offers a number of ideas and items that you can add to your binder to make it an even more useful tool.

How Will You Use It?

The first thing you want to do when building a binder is ask yourself how it will best fit into your games. Do you need a factual reference sheet handy during play? Do you want to keep better track of all the little details that happen during each game session? Would a planning assistant help you? What kind of information would best serve you and make your job as DM easier?

It's a good idea to take a few minutes to build a wish list of all the things you'd like to see in an "ultimate DM's binder." Then, use your list to search for the materials you need to purchase, photocopy, research, or write over the next few weeks.

Also, give some thought to your gaming environment. Consider the amount of room available: Can you keep several binders nearby, or do you need to combine your information into one binder to conserve space? Do you only have space for a small notebook behind your screens? Is there enough space for a side table where you can lay your binder open for quick access during play?

What Will You Put in It?

There are a number of things you can put into your binder, so ask yourself what information would help make your job as DM easier. Another approach is to consider what your weaknesses are and try to use your binder to help with those particular areas. For example, perhaps you have a difficult time creating names on the spur of the moment. The solution is to stock your DM's binder with lists of names or random name generators for people and locations so that you can quickly get names as you need them.

Below are 10 different binder ideas along with examples of what you can put in them. Keep in mind that many of these ideas overlap. For example, you could put house rules into your Game World binder, but it would also fit into a Rules Reference binder.

1. **Record-Keeping Binder:** game session notes, an ongoing journal written by one of the players, and a campaign synopsis
2. **Rules Reference Binder:** photocopied tables and charts from the corebooks and supplements, house rules, and errata
3. **Game World Binder:** a historical timeline, rumors and gossip, campaign news, the world pantheon, maps, and prices for goods and services
4. **Future Ideas Binder:** random treasure, encounter ideas, plot hooks, and story ideas, as well as copies of new spells, items, and prestige classes
5. **Monsters/NPCs Binder:** statistics and pictures for monsters or NPCs in your world, as well as a list of where the PCs could encounter them
6. **Combat Assistant:** various combat rules, as well as random encounter ideas
7. **Magic Reference:** rules governing magic and specific spells, ideas for spells, and spell-casting prestige classes
8. **PC Information Binder:** history and family backgrounds for the PCs, any goals or secrets they have, and copies of their statistics. This binder is also a useful place to store "homework" that you've assigned your players (see *Dragon* #288)

9. Blank Forms Binder: unused character sheets, combat planners, and graph paper

10. Stat Block Binder: statistics blocks for generic cities, NPCs, and monsters

Binder Options

There are a number of options you can choose from when creating your DM's binder. Each option has advantages and disadvantages, so it's a good idea to briefly consider what format works best for you before you spend a lot of time assembling and building the binder. Use the 10 Binder Types chart below to learn what type of binder best suits your needs.

DM Binder Organization

A critical element of a DM's binder is that you are quickly able to find what you need. This means that good organization is key to creating a successful binder. Many types of binders are self-organizing, like boxes of index cards and accordion files. Some binders—like 3-ring and spiral notebooks—are not, so you'll need to find a system of organization that is easy for you to maintain.

Also, be careful that you don't over-organize. Time spent sorting and filing often means time not spent planning and writing. The point of using a binder is to help you run a better game—it's not meant to become a time-consuming chore.

When building your DM's binder, feel free to change, experiment, and try out new ideas, after all, every DM and gaming group is different, and your binder should reflect you and your group's unique needs.

10 Binder Types

To help you choose which binder type is best for you, we've rated 10 different binders in 7 categories that are important to consider when deciding what type of binder to use.

●: Lame ●: So-so ●: Not bad ●: It rocks

BINDER TYPE	COMPUTER COMPATIBILITY	SIZE/EASE OF TRANSPORT	EASE OF USE IN PLAY	ORGANIZATION	ABILITY TO ADD CONTENT	DURABILITY	PRICE
3-RING BINDER (1 IN.)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Can easily add/remove pages or printouts in any order; can use multiple binders for specific topics; clear, plastic pocket cover makes a cool display for maps or charts.							
3-RING BINDER (3 IN.)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Can easily add/remove pages or printouts in any order; large size allows storage of all information in one place but requires more organization; can get bulky and hard to transport, D-ring style makes thumbing through pages easier.							
SPIRAL NOTEBOOK	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Small size allows you to use multiple notebooks for specialized information; can't add pages or change order; loose papers can be lost easily; soft cover offers almost no protection; some are hole-punched and can be placed into a 3-ring binder.							
CLIPBOARD	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Great for notetaking while standing up or if table space is limited; can easily add/remove pages or printouts in any order; limited storage; must flip through pages to find the one you need.							
REPORT FOLDER	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Variety of styles and colors; light and easy to transport; plastic cover offers some protection; can add/remove pages or printouts in any order; can only add a limited amount of pages; can use multiple folders for specialized information							
ACCORDIAN/FILE BOX	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Easy to organize and find information quickly; can easily add/remove pages or printouts in any order; easy storage of small magazine clippings; extra space for dice and book supplements; must find and remove pages to use them; can get bulky.							
INDEX CARDS & BOX	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Easy to organize and transport; many index card boxes include dividers, allowing greater organization; can easily add/remove content; printouts must be folded down to fit into box; index cards are replenishable; can create specialized boxes for differing information.							
BACKSEAT OF YOUR CAR	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Easy to transport; great protection except from passengers and pets; easy storage of nearly any object; organization suffers from the inclusion of empty soda cans and fast food wrappers.							
PERSONAL ORGANIZER	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Most include pouches, paper pad, pencil holders, calculator, and a small binder to secure pages; zip or velcro fastener keeps pages secure and protected; can easily add/remove pages or printouts; can be expensive							
JOURNAL-STYLE BOOK	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Hard cover offers good protection; can be stored attractively on bookshelves; add labels to spine for easy reference; small size allows you to use multiple journals for specialized information; can't add additional pages; can be expensive.							

by Ray Winninger

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Raiders of the Lost World, Part II

"Dungeoncraft" is an on-going column that explores the fine art of Dungeon Mastering and offers an interesting behind-the-scenes look at the development of an actual D&D campaign. If you've missed any of the previous installments of "Dungeoncraft," you can find them online at: **http://www.wizards.com/dragon**

Over the last few months, we've discussed strategies for creating NPCs. Last month, we reviewed some guidelines for creating NPC personalities and presented the Sixth Rule of Dungeoncraft.

The Sixth Rule of Dungeoncraft: Simple, easily identifiable characteristics are the best tools for portraying NPCs.

This month, we're going to create two of the NPCs we'll need to get the Lost World campaign off the ground. We've already designed a small community to serve as the players' home base during the early stages of the campaign, so what we really need are a few interesting NPCs to help the community come alive in the players' imaginations. If you've been following "Dungeoncraft" for a long time, you've probably noticed that the home base we created for the Lost World is more detailed than the base we designed for our last campaign. That's because this time, we're hoping to run some adventures set within the base early in the campaign. The additional details we created make it easier to design and play such adventures.

Obviously, our first task is to figure out just how many NPCs we need to create and what roles they'll play in the campaign. We've already decided that a couple thousand people live in Janda's Valley (the Lost World's home base), so we couldn't possibly flesh out each and every one of them even if we wanted to. Instead, we have to concentrate on a handful of important characters—those who are likely to play an important role in the campaign, or those whom the players are likely to encounter. If you think of your campaign as a television series, these characters are the "guest stars," while all the other NPCs are merely "extras."

When creating home base NPCs at the outset of a campaign, there are two formulas that can help you determine how many NPCs you'll need. Feel free to create your own templates for different types of bases:

Standard Bases (4 NPCs)
One Friend
One Specialist
One Authority
One Mentor, one Patron, or one Enigma

Adventure-Friendly Bases (7 NPCs)
One Patron
One Enigma
One Enemy
One Friend
One Specialist
One Authority
One Competitor

The formula for adventure-friendly bases helps when you expect to run adventures set in the base (like the Lost World campaign) early in the campaign, but the formula for standard bases is sufficient when you don't expect to run such adventures until later in the campaign (if at all). It's important to realize that these are simply guidelines. An experienced DM should feel adequately prepared with four or five fleshed-out NPCs. With a little practice under your belt, you'll be able to improvise a character based on one of the stereotypical personalities that we discussed last issue should the players seek out an NPC that you haven't yet designed. DMs who feel more comfortable when they have more NPCs prepared, or those wishing to run extremely intricate campaigns, should prepare more.

Note that the lists of important NPCs are organized by the role the NPC will play in the campaign. These roles were designed to provide maximum flexibility and to insure that you'll have the tools you need to design and support adventures more easily.

NPC Roles

Friend: As the name implies, a friend is someone the players can get to know and count on for occasional, low-grade assistance. A good friend helps the players feel grounded in the home base

by making it seem more like a true home. If you're creating an adventure-friendly base, threatening a friendly NPC in some fashion can be a powerful means of drawing the players into a town adventure. Possible friends might include: the innkeeper's daughter, a beggar, or a member of the town guard who has decided to watch out for the adventurers.

Specialist: Specialists are NPCs that have an uncommon skill or capability that might prove useful to the players. Specialists give you important tools you can use when designing adventures, because they allow you to throw clues and situations at the players that require the specialist's unusual capabilities to unravel. If one of your specialists speaks an obscure, ancient language, for instance, you can create an interesting challenge by giving the players an opportunity to find an important clue in the form of a scroll written in this language. Now the players must not only find the scroll, but they must also realize that the NPC can decipher it and negotiate for his services. Specialists might be sages, wandering wizards, skilled blacksmiths or unusually well-connected merchants.

Authority: An authority represents the interests of the government that controls the home base. Authority figures serve the important function of reminding the players of the power structures that exist in the campaign. Their relationship with the PCs shouldn't necessarily be antagonistic, nor should it necessarily be friendly. They should simply pop up from time to time to give the players an indication of what those who run the town are like and what they might be thinking. The authority NPC can also handle any administrative and official activities (tax collection, organizing investigations into the PCs' complaints, and so on) that crop up during play. Tax collectors, guard captains, castellans, or bureaucrats might all serve as useful authorities.

Patron: The patron is an NPC of significant means who can lend the characters resources or hire them to perform important services. Patrons are blunt but effective means of catapulting the players into an adventure. ("My daughter has been kidnapped by a band of orc marauders. If you can get her back, I'll give you the manor house behind our estate and all the gold you can carry!") Patrons can also serve as a source of aid or influence that the players can turn to in times of dire need. Such favors usually come at a cost, though. ("I'll loan you the thousand gold pieces you need to get your friend's wounds cured if you agree to act as guards on a spice caravan I'm sending out tomorrow.") Wealthy merchants, noble aristocrats, and retired adventurers all make good patrons.

Enigma: Something about the enigma—her motives, her past, or her allegiances—is mysterious and possibly worrisome. Her main function is to provide the players with a riddle that captures their interest, possibly giving them something to investigate and occupy some of their time between adventures. A good enigma might be someone who appears to follow one or more of the PCs around town, a mysterious lady who seems to come and go without a trace, or a nervous stranger who is obviously going to great lengths to protect a secret. Most enigmas turn out to be fairly capable characters and adventurers in their own right. Some are even monsters who use disguises and/or deception to live among the townsfolk (vampires, lycanthropes, doppelgangers, and polymorphed dragons might employ such tactics).

Enemy: Enemies develop an antagonistic relationship with the player characters. They and their minions can serve as ready-made opposition in any adventures you set inside your home base. Ideally, you should construct the enemy NPC so he is powerful or influential enough to plague the players over the course of several interrelated adventures. A good enemy might be a dishonest noble, the head of the thieves' guild, or a greedy merchant.

Competitor: A competitor provides opposition without being antagonistic. Most competitors lead adventures on their own, but non-adventuring competitors offer a lot of potential. For example, players seeking to explore a long-forgotten cave might race against a rival adventuring party. On the other hand, it might be more interesting to include a non-combatant who simply buys the land and attempts to claim the recovered treasure as part of his property. At their best, competitors cause the players a small amount of frustration, but ultimately enrich the player's sense of accomplishment.

Continuing Development

It almost goes without saying, but it's important to note that this first handful of NPCs that you create won't be alone for long. As the campaign develops and you run more adventures, you'll find it necessary to create all sorts of additional characters. The important things to consider at this juncture are: make sure you leave yourself the flexibility you'll need to easily add new characters to the mix in the future, and whenever you create details about a new character (even a very minor one), make sure you record those details so you can maintain consistency in the campaign should the character reappear in a later adventure. Over time, you'll find that NPCs drift on and off the list of important characters much like guest stars drift in and out of a TV program.

As the campaign develops, you'll find it necessary to create additional characters.

Janda's Valley NPCs

Here are two NPCs created for Janda's Valley, along with a few words explaining the genesis of each of them.

Azzrok

Azzrok exemplifies the silent type trait described last issue. His relative silence gives people the impression that he knows much more than he is willing to share.

Azzrok is a wealthy merchant who made his fortune by capturing and selling dinosaurs to serve as mounts and beasts of burden. He owns a small pen located just outside of the Valley's merchant quarter and employs more than two dozen aides and bodyguards.

Local rumor has it that Azzrok is also involved in several shadier businesses as well, although his discretion makes it difficult to pin anything on him. It's certainly true that he's one of the most

Azzrok the Herder

Male Human, 4th-level expert "patron"

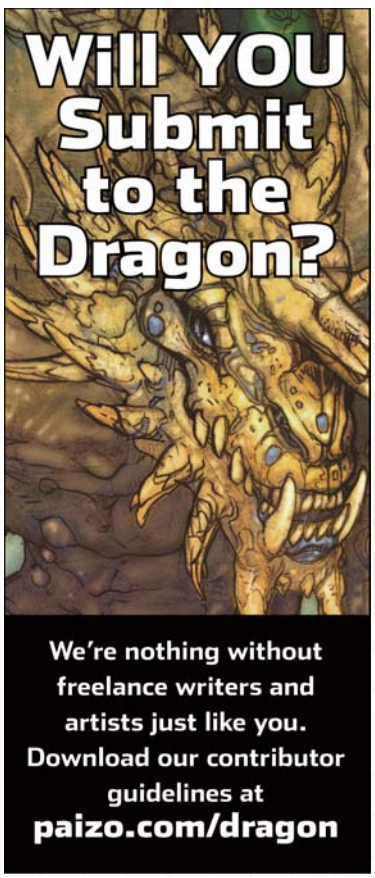
Strength:	10	Fort. Save:	+2
Dexterity:	10	Ref. Save:	+1
Constitution:	12	Will Save:	+7
Intelligence:	12	Alignment:	NG
Wisdom:	16	Speed:	30 ft.
Charisma:	12	Armor Class:	14
Hit Points:	18	Flat-footed AC:	14
Melee Attack:	+4	Touch AC:	10

Special: Proficient with simple weapons and light armor.
Skills: Appraise +8, Animal Empathy +8, Bluff +8, Gather Information +8, Handle Animal +10, Ride +8, Spot +12, Wilderness Lore +10
Feats: Alertness, Skill Focus (Handle Animal), Track
Languages: Common, Elven
Possessions: Masterwork studded leather armor, *potion of Charisma, +1 amulet of natural armor*, masterwork shortspear

well-connected and well-informed residents of the whole valley. There seems to be almost no piece of information he can't uncover and no item he can't obtain if the price is right.

In accord with the Second Rule of Dungeoncraft, Azzrok has a secret. Years ago, he struck a bargain with a powerful wizard who lives on the other side of the Lost World. The wizard was locked in a vendetta with a rival sorcerer and pledged to destroy the sorcerer's entire family. Azzrok fell in love with the sorcerer's daughter and promised to forfeit his own life to the wizard in exchange for the girl's. Amused by the sentiment, the wizard agreed. Since then, Azzrok used a substantial portion of his personal fortune to bribe the wizard and purchase an extra ten years of life, a term that expires within the year. Once the ten years run out, Azzrok must either forfeit himself or find some other way to forestall repayment.

Azzrok is obviously wealthy enough to hire the player characters to undertake a wide variety of missions. He can send them out as spies or couriers, or he can simply dispatch them to capture some dinosaurs in the wilderness nearby. He can also serve as an important font of information and hired help.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Jakka

Jakka, a thirteen-year-old boy, speaks in the stilted, almost broken dialect of a savage. Orphaned as a young boy, he's been on his own for as long as he can remember. Although many other inhabitants of Janda's stronghold look out for him when they can, he's had to fend for himself so much that he's become one of the scrappiest and most resourceful inhabitants of the entire valley. As such, he's an accomplished thief, beggar, and spy, although he's clearly good at heart.

Jakka is fiercely loyal to his friends and never forgets a kindness. If a party gives him friendship and shelter, he'll readily view them as friends and do anything in his power to help them. Frequently, these services amaze their recipients. Jakka is so observant and resourceful that he is often capable of spotting trouble from the subtlest clues and finding a way to warn his friends long before the unpleasantness starts. This, combined with his ability to move freely about the Valley and gain entrance to places the PCs could never visit, makes him an ideal ally.

Jakka's secret (unknown even to him) is that he is the son of Gromm, a prominent general from the Bruun tribe. Although Gromm was responsible for many of the tribe's greatest (and cruelest) victories, he eventually uncovered the true nature of the mysterious "were-raptor" who was urging the tribal elders to drink tyrannosaur blood and step up their violent raids against neighboring tribes (see *Dragon* #282). Before he could reveal his discoveries to the rest of the tribe, the were-raptor grew wise to his inquiries and started exterminating Gromm's entire family. Just before losing his life in an unsuccessful attempt to kill the raptor, Gromm hid his six-year-old son by abandoning the boy deep in the jungle with only a prayer to Kalaar and a war knife for protection. Amazingly, Jakka found his own way across almost one hundred and fifty miles of wilderness to Janda's Valley, where he has lived ever since. Although he no longer remembers his father or much else about his early life, he still has the war knife that he was given all those years ago and jealously guards it as his most prized possession.

Jakka gives the PCs a valuable potential friend, but he's still vulnerable enough to occasionally require their protection, providing a nice springboard for future adventures. Jakka's secret past might serve as an excellent way to eventually introduce the PCs to the events that caused the schism between the two Bruun subtribes.

"Dungeoncraft" is going to skip the upcoming issue, but the column will be back in issue #292. Come back for more NPCs from Janda's Valley and guidelines on how to weave their backgrounds in and out of the players' origin stories.

Jakka

Male Human, 3rd-level rogue "friend"

Strength:	10	Fort. Save:	+2
Dexterity:	14	Ref. Save:	+5
Constitution:	12	Will Save:	+1
Intelligence:	10	Alignment:	CG
Wisdom:	10	Speed:	30 ft.
Charisma:	12	Armor Class:	12
Hit Points:	14	Flat-footed AC:	12
Melee Attack:	+3	Touch AC:	12

Special: Proficient with rogue weapons and light armor, evasion, sneak attack +2d6, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC)
Skills: Appraise +6, Balance +8, Bluff +7, Escape Artist +8, Hide +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +8, Pick Pocket +5, Search +3, Spot +8
Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Mobility
Languages: Common
Possessions: Masterwork dagger

Faerûn

Dragon 5 presents

City	Cliffs/Escarpment
Port	Cleared/Mix
Fortress	Grasslands
Ruins	Forest
Site	Jungle
Capital	Marsh
Port/Capital	Swamp
Temple	Moor
Bridge	Barren/Badlands
Road	Volcano
Track	Glacier
Hills	River
Low Mountains	Subterranean River
High Mountains	Sandy Desert
	Rocky Desert

0 120 240 360 480 MILES

The Great Sea
Bay of Dancing Dolphins
Lake Halruaa
Akhkaur Swamp
Rethild (the Great Swamp)
Halagard
Halarahh
Maarlith
Cathyr
Dambrath
Hills of the Dead Kings
Gnollwatch Mountains
River Ammath
River Dambron
Forest of Amtar
Southern Lluirwood
Lluirwood
Luiren
Luirenstrand
Isle of Quelthiir
Shoun
Beluir
Chethel
Krenalir
Mortik Swamp
Eartheart
Delzimmer
Three Swords
Kholtar
Rethmar
Channathgate
Kormul
Lhesper
Shaarmid
Thruldar
Estagund
Chavyondat
Var the Golden
Ormpé
Vaelan
Assur
The Golden Water
Durpar
Veldorn
Aerilpar Forest
Raurin the Dust Desert
The Giant's Belt
Dragonspine Mountains
Mishtan
City of the Dead
Nelderild
Gheldaneth
Skuld
River of Shadows
River of Spears
River of Swords
Azulduth (The Lake of Salt)
Unthalass
Hardcastle
Innarlith
Yhep
Dalelost
Derlusk
Kagarr
Ormpetarr
Elbulder
Fort Arran
Sespech
Nimpeth
Arrabar
Mussum
Hlondeth
Iljak
Samra
Shamph
Akanax
Chessenta
Methmere
The Vilhon Reach
The Akanamere
Chondath
The Maerthwatch
The Chondalwood
The Golden Plains
The Golden Road
The Nagafelow
The Nagawater
River Arran
River Adder
Winding River
Methwood
Unther
The Green Lands
River Alamber
River Angol
The Road of Dust
The Smoking Mountains
Black Ash Peaks
Adder Peaks
Ankhwood
Qurth Forest
The Duskwood
Firestrap Mountains
Hlangol Mountains
Council Hills
Sharawood
The Eastern Shaar
Toadstool Mountains
Raftwood
Shaarwood
River Shaar
The Shaar
The Landrise
The Great Rift
The Riftlake
Rathgaunt Hills
Channathwood
River Channath
The Misty Vale
The Wyrmbones
The Dun Hills
River Talar
Bandit Wastes
The North Wall
The East Wall
The Nath
Halruaa
River Aluier
River Halar
River Maeru
Lake Maeru
Mount Talath
Cormanthor Mountains
The Lionstongue
River Gundan